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Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 57/182. It reviews steps taken by the Assembly and its Main Committees during its fifty-seventh session to promote the achievement of the goal of gender equality through the gender mainstreaming strategy. Particular focus is placed on actions taken in relation to the follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and at major events during the past year. An assessment of the work of the Economic and Social Council is also provided. Finally, the catalytic role of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in support of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes of the United Nations is addressed.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/182, requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women on follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[1] and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly with an assessment of progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system, including by providing information on key achievements, lessons learned and best practices, and to recommend further measures and strategies for future action within the United Nations system. It also requested the Secretary-General to integrate a gender perspective in his reporting to the Assembly, in order to support gender-sensitive policy formulation.

2. Reports on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on measures taken within the United Nations system to strengthen gender mainstreaming (E/CN.6/2003/2), and to the Economic and Social Council, focusing on providing information on key achievements, lessons learned and best practices, and recommending further measures and strategies for action within the United Nations system (E/2003/69).

II. General Assembly

A. World Summit on Sustainable Development

3. In the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development,[2] participants committed to ensuring that women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all the activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The Plan of Implementation[3] recognized that the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit should benefit all, particularly women, youth, children and vulnerable groups. It further acknowledged that gender equality is one of the elements that forms the basis for sustainable development.

4. To achieve the goal of poverty eradication, the Plan of Implementation highlighted, inter alia, the need to promote women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making at all levels, mainstream gender perspectives in all policies and strategies, eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and improve the status, health and economic welfare of women and girls through full and equal access to economic opportunity, land, credit, education and health-care services. It also called for access to agricultural resources for people living in poverty, especially women and indigenous communities, and an increase in decent employment, credit and income for the urban poor, through appropriate national policies promoting equal opportunities for women and men.

5. Regarding measures designed to change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, the Plan included actions to promote education to provide information for both men and women about available energy sources and

technologies. With respect to promoting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development, specific attention was drawn to women and gender equality in a number of areas, including: water and sanitation infrastructure and service development; access to public information and participation in support of policy and decision-making related to water resources management and project implementation; rural development, agriculture, nutrition and food security; protection of indigenous resource management systems, rural planning and development; public and private investments that help eliminate inequities facing mountain communities; conserving and using biodiversity in a sustainable way; and minerals, metals and mining development.

6. When addressing health and sustainable development, the Plan of Implementation focused attention on women within the following themes: addressing the causes of ill health, including environmental causes, and the impact on development; ensuring equal access to health-care services, giving particular attention to maternal and emergency obstetric care; promoting healthy living, including reproductive and sexual health; transfer and dissemination of technologies for safe water, sanitation and waste management for rural and urban areas; reduction of HIV/AIDS; reduction of respiratory diseases and other health impacts resulting from air pollution; and provision of affordable energy to rural communities.

7. In reviewing actions aimed at sustainable development, attention was drawn to the promotion of gender equality in the African region when addressing: the right to development; dealing effectively with natural disasters and conflicts, including their humanitarian and environmental impacts; and securing equitable access to land tenure, clarifying resource rights and responsibilities and providing access to credit.

8. In addressing the internationally agreed development goals, steps were called for to avoid any unilateral measure that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children; eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels of education no later than 2015, through gender mainstreaming and the creation of a gender-sensitive educational system; and encourage further work on indicators for sustainable development by countries at the national level, including integration of gender aspects.

9. The Economic and Social Council was called upon to intensify its efforts to ensure that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of its activities concerning the coordinated implementation of Agenda 21. The Plan of Implementation stated that, at the national level, women should be able to participate fully and equally in policy formulation and decision-making and that a gender perspective should be mainstreamed in all those activities designed to enhance national institutional arrangements for sustainable development, including at the local level.

B. World Summit on the Information Society

10. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/182, welcomed the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, and encouraged Governments and all other stakeholders to integrate a gender perspective in the preparatory process and outcome documents.

11. In the agreed conclusions on "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women",[4] adopted by consensus by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-seventh session on 14 March 2003, a focus on the gender dimensions of information and communication technologies was considered essential for preventing and combating an adverse impact of the digital revolution on gender equality. The Commission stated that media and information and communication technologies could become central tools for women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality and agreed on a wide range of actions and recommendations to be undertaken by different actors. Those actions were aimed at integrating gender perspectives in national policies, legislation, programmes, projects, strategies and regulatory and technical instruments; creating monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation of gender-sensitive policies and regulations; and analysing the gender impact of such policies. Particular attention was given to making education a priority for the development of information and communication technologies and taking measures to promote girls' education so as to ensure access of women and girls to information and communication technologies. The agreed conclusions further called for establishing or expanding training on the use, design and production of information and communication technologies, including to prepare women and girls to take on leadership roles and for integrating a gender perspective in information and communication technologies training programmes for teachers and media professors. The Commission also discussed women's equal access to information and communication technologies-based economic activities and new employment opportunities in that area and called for strengthening the use of existing communication technologies, such as radio and television, as well as telecommunication and print, in parallel to enhancing the use of new technologies for gender equality. Steps were also proposed to combat information and communication technologies and media-based violence against women including criminal misuse of information and communication technologies.

12. The Commission welcomed the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society and urged all participants to take into account the recommendations contained in the agreed conclusions and to integrate gender perspectives in every facet of the Summit. It further encouraged the high participation of women in the Summit, as well as of significant numbers of gender equality experts and of women information and communication technologies experts as members of national delegations, civil society organizations and the business community. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women were transmitted by the Chairperson of the Commission to the President of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit, and by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, so that the recommendations could be taken into account in an appropriate manner during the preparations and at the Summit.

C. General Assembly and its Main Committees

13. At its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions that included attention to gender equality and/or gender perspectives, which are summarized below. While none of the Assembly's Main Committees

reflected gender perspectives systematically in their outcomes, the First, Second and Third Committees paid the most attention to those issues. The Fifth Committee, in its resolution 57/305, reiterated its request, contained in its resolutions 53/221 and 55/258, including the reaffirmation of the goal of 50/50 gender distribution by 2000 in all categories of posts within the United Nations system, especially at the D-1 level and above. No reference was made to gender perspectives in the work of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Committees.

1. Resolutions adopted without reference to a Main Committee

14. General Assembly resolution 57/7 on the final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development encouraged efforts to raise awareness of the New Partnership and to involve all African stakeholders, including women's organizations, in its implementation. It also welcomed the commitment of African countries to promote and enhance the role of African women in all aspects of the implementation.

15. The General Assembly, noting the important contribution of women in the development process, called upon all Member States and the international community to consider contributing to the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States to, inter alia, strengthen the role of women in the development process (resolution 57/40). Moreover, in its resolution 57/44 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community, the Assembly, recognizing the important role that women play in the development of the region, appealed to the United Nations, its related bodies and the international community to support the Community's efforts in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, with specific emphasis on the enhancement of the role of women in the development process. It welcomed the establishment by the Community of the Women in Business Network, aimed at empowering women by, inter alia, facilitating and enhancing their access to credit and training in business and technical skills. The Assembly called upon the international community to continue to assist the Angolan authorities, especially by providing humanitarian, financial and material assistance, in alleviating the suffering of the Angolan people, in particular children, women and the elderly.

16. The General Assembly introduced the empowerment of women as one of the priority sectors and called upon the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to increase their cooperation with the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations in that regard (resolution 57/46). It expressed its satisfaction at the exchange with the Organization of American States of information and substantive reports, including reports on the advancement in the status of women, and welcomed the efforts of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen cooperation with inter-American institutions in various fields, including women and development (resolution 57/157). The Assembly continued to acknowledge the contribution of the Council of Europe to the protection and strengthening of democracy and the rule of law on the European continent, including its activities in the promotion of gender equality (resolution 57/156). However, the resolution on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted by the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session (resolution 57/47) does not contain any mention of gender issues as in previous years.

17. With regard to humanitarian and other assistance, the General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions referring to gender equality. It continued to express its grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian, economic and social situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and about the effect of the continued fighting, especially on women and children (resolution 57/146). Within the context of humanitarian assistance to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Assembly renewed its call upon all relevant actors to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate the humanitarian needs of the vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons, bearing in mind the special situation of women (resolution 57/148). As to assistance for humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and development for Timor-Leste, the Assembly welcomed the growing participation of the women of Timor-Leste in all aspects of society and encouraged further efforts to address gender issues, including the need for research, services and appropriate legislation in order to combat domestic violence and other gender-related crimes (resolution 57/105). With regard to Afghanistan, the Assembly remained convinced that gender-sensitive government is one of the elements that can lead to durable peace and reconciliation. It continued to stress the importance of the full and equal participation of women in political, economic, cultural and social life throughout the country and called upon the Transitional Authority to protect and promote the equal rights of men and women. It welcomed the positive steps taken so far towards an improvement in the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of many Afghans, in particular women and children, while noting with grave concern the remaining discriminatory practices that hinder the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms (resolution 57/113).

18. When addressing assistance in mine action, the Assembly invited Member States to develop and support national programmes to promote awareness of landmines, including among women and children. It reiterated its dismay at the existing high number of victims of mines, especially among civilian populations, including women and children. It continued to encourage Governments, relevant United Nations bodies and other donors to take further action to promote gender and age-appropriate mine-risk education programmes (resolution 57/159).

19. In its resolution 57/161 on the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, the General Assembly noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the peace agreements in some areas, in particular of a law criminalizing discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and other criteria.

20. In its resolution 57/294 on the 2001-2010 Decade to roll back malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa, the General Assembly took note of the real progress towards the implementation of plans to combat malaria, including most notably the growing use of preventive treatment of pregnant women and prompt access to treatment with effective drugs. It called for joint comprehensive efforts between Africa and the international community to ensure that by 2005 at least 60 per cent of those at risk for malaria, in particular pregnant women and children under 5 years of age, benefit from protective measures.

2. First Committee: disarmament and international security issues

21. In the context of regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the General Assembly noted with satisfaction the holding of a Subregional

Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflict in Central Africa at Kinshasa in November 2001 (resolution 57/88).

22. The Assembly also adopted a resolution on United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services, recognizing the need for Member States to take gender equality into account when nominating candidates to the programme (resolution 57/93).

3. Second Committee: economic and financial issues

23. Recalling its endorsement of the outcomes of the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the General Assembly addressed the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence and underlined that it is essential to invest in gender-sensitive basic economic and social infrastructure, social services and social protection. It emphasized the critical need to reinforce national efforts in capacity-building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in such areas as gender budget policies (resolution 57/274). The Assembly also addressed the issue of culture and development and recognized that tolerance and respect for diversity effectively promote and are supported by, inter alia, the empowerment of women (resolution 57/249).

24. In the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, the Assembly continued to express its deep concern that the number of people living in extreme poverty in many countries continues to increase, with women and children constituting the majority and the most affected group, in particular in the least developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The Assembly reaffirmed that good governance at the national level is essential for poverty eradication and sustainable development and that freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including gender equality, are also essential and mutually reinforcing. It also reaffirmed that the eradication of poverty should be addressed in an integrated way, taking into account the need for the empowerment of women and stressed the importance of increasing access to and control over resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections, for the poor, in particular women (resolution 57/266). When addressing industrial development cooperation, the Assembly reiterated that industrialization is a key element in the promotion of sustainable development and in the creation of productive employment, value-added income generation and, thus, the eradication of poverty, as well as in the facilitation of social integration, including the integration of women into the development process (resolution 57/243).

25. In the context of the international financial system and development, the Assembly stressed that the advice of multilateral financial institutions should take into account social costs of adjustment programmes, which should be designed to minimize negative impacts on the vulnerable segments of society, and underscored the importance in this regard of gender-sensitive employment and poverty eradication policies and strategies (resolution 57/241). With regard to commodities, the Assembly recognized that enhancing the role of women at all levels and in all aspects of rural development, agriculture, nutrition and food security is imperative. It further strongly emphasized the need for actions at both the national and

international levels, inter alia, to improve market access conditions, address supply-side constraints and provide support for capacity-building, including in areas that actively involve women (resolution 57/236).

4. Third Committee: social, humanitarian and cultural issues

26. Two items of the Third Committee — "Advancement of women" and "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women" — are specifically devoted to gender equality. In its resolution on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Assembly welcomed the increased attention to the situation of women and girls and the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations. It called upon Governments and all other relevant actors to continue to integrate a gender perspective in the implementation of and follow-up to recent United Nations conferences, summits and special sessions and in future reports on the subject. It welcomed the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society and encouraged Governments and all other stakeholders to integrate a gender perspective in the preparatory processes and outcome documents. The Assembly also acknowledged that the creation of an enabling environment, including through the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making, is necessary to ensure the full participation of women in economic activities and called upon States to remove obstacles to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

27. The Assembly welcomed the inclusion of the issue of gender mainstreaming in the agenda of the Economic and Social Council, the consideration of annual progress made in gender mainstreaming and the attention given to gender perspectives in the outcomes of the 2002 substantive session of the Council. It requested the Secretary-General to include in his annual and quinquennial reports on the follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration an assessment of the progress made in promoting the goal of gender equality, in particular in relation to the development goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration, and recommendations to improve the measurements and coverage of indicators so that progress towards gender equality can be evaluated over time (resolution 57/182).

28. In its resolution on the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations (resolution 57/202), the Assembly encouraged the efforts of the human rights treaty bodies to monitor more effectively the human rights of women, bearing in mind the workshops on gender integration, and reaffirmed the responsibility of all treaty bodies to integrate a gender perspective into their work. The Assembly also expressed its concern regarding the considerable number of communications received by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders that indicate the serious nature of the risks faced by human rights defenders and the particular consequences for women human rights defenders (resolution 57/209).

29. With regard to regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights, the Assembly noted with appreciation the Constitutive Act of the African Union, in particular article 4, in which it is stated that the Union shall function in accordance with several principles, inter alia, the promotion of gender equality (resolution 57/210). The Assembly adopted its resolution on assistance to

refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, considering that women and children are the majority of the population affected by conflict and bear the brunt of atrocities and other consequences of conflict (resolution 57/183).

30. When addressing the issue of violence against women, the Assembly welcomed specific legal and comprehensive legislative measures being enacted or contemplated, in particular with regard to various forms of violence against women and girls, and welcomed the launching of various initiatives, strategies and action plans aimed at enhancement of the economic capacity of women and the monitoring of the various forms of violence against women (resolution 57/181). The Assembly also stressed the need to treat all forms of violence against women and girls, including crimes committed in the name of honour, as a criminal offence, punishable by law and underlined the importance of the empowerment of women and their effective participation in decision-making and policy-making processes as one of the critical tools to prevent and eliminate those types of crimes. It called upon all States to investigate, prosecute and document cases of crimes against women committed in the name of honour and punish the perpetrators, and to intensify efforts to raise awareness of the need to prevent and eliminate those crimes with the aim of changing the attitudes and behaviour that allow such crimes to be committed by involving, inter alia, community leaders. The Assembly underlined the need to strengthen the capacity of those responsible for enforcing the law to respond to complaints of such crimes and take necessary measures to ensure the protection of actual and potential victims. It called upon States to include, if within their reporting obligations, information on legal and policy measures adopted and implemented to prevent and eliminate crimes against women committed in the name of honour, where appropriate, in their reports to the human rights treaty bodies (resolution 57/179). In its resolution on strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity, the Assembly continued to note the desirability of closer coordination and cooperation among States in combating crime, including the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, especially women and children (resolution 57/173).

31. When addressing the issue of human rights and extreme poverty, the Assembly, recalling its resolution 56/207, expressed its deep concern that the number of people living in extreme poverty continued to increase, with women and children constituting the majority and the most affected group (resolution 57/211).

32. The Assembly continued to raise gender perspectives in its resolutions on human rights education (resolution 57/206), the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (resolution 57/212) and the United Nations Literacy Decade (resolution 57/166).

33. When addressing the right to development, the Assembly recognized the important role and the rights of women and the application of a gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue in the process of realizing the right to development and noted the positive relationship between women's education and their equal participation in the activities of the community and the promotion of the right to development (resolution 57/223).

34. The Assembly called upon all States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment to sign and ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol. In the Optional Protocol, adopted by the Assembly in December 2002, the Assembly agreed that in

the composition of the Subcommittee on Prevention, consideration shall be given to balanced gender representation on the basis of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and requested the States parties to strive for gender balance among the experts of the national preventive mechanisms (resolution 57/199). In addition to inviting States parties to the Convention to incorporate a gender perspective when submitting reports to the Committee against Torture, and the Special Rapporteur to continue to examine questions of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment directed against women, the Assembly urged Governments to take effective measures to provide redress and to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including their gender-based manifestations (resolution 57/200). The Assembly adopted a resolution on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in which it recalled that the Commission on Human Rights had requested the Special Rapporteur to apply a gender perspective in her work (resolution 57/214).

35. In addressing trafficking in women and girls, the Assembly, recognizing the importance of bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation mechanisms and initiatives to address the problem of trafficking in women and children, in particular girls, welcomed the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to consider at its forty-seventh session the priority theme "Women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls". It urged Governments to draw up, as appropriate, national action plans and programmes to improve the protection of trafficked women and girls and called upon them to ensure that the treatment of victims of trafficking, especially women and girls, as well as all measures taken against trafficking in persons, are applied with full respect for the human rights of those victims. It encouraged Governments and relevant United Nations bodies, within existing resources, to raise public awareness of the issue of trafficking, particularly in women and girls and to emphasize that trafficking is a crime, in order to reduce the demand for trafficked women and children. It also encouraged Governments to undertake campaigns aimed at clarifying opportunities, limitations and rights in the event of migration so as to enable women to make informed decisions and to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking. The Assembly invited the business sector, in particular the tourism and telecommunications industries, to cooperate with Governments in eliminating trafficking in women and children, in particular girls. It requested the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session proposals for a future international/United Nations year against trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, with a view to protecting their dignity and human rights (resolution 57/176). The Assembly adopted a resolution on protection of migrants, in which it reiterated the need for all States parties to protect fully the universally recognized human rights of migrants, especially women and children (resolution 57/218).

36. The Assembly continued to stress, in the resolutions adopted on the rights of the child, the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes relating to children (resolution 57/190). It expressed grave concern that, in some countries, the situation of children is adversely affected by unilateral coercive measures that hinder the well-being of the population, with particular consequences for women and children (resolution 57/222). The resolution on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women recognized that the equal enjoyment by women of all human rights will promote the

realization of the rights of the child, bearing in mind the special needs of girls (resolution 57/178).

37. The Assembly was convinced that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reveal themselves in a differentiated manner for women and girls and can be among the factors leading to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence, multiple forms of discrimination and limitation or denial of their human rights (resolution 57/189). It also recognized the need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to address multiple forms of discrimination (resolution 57/195). The Assembly emphasized that tolerance and respect for diversity facilitate the universal promotion and protection of human rights, including gender equality and the enjoyment of all human rights by all (resolution 57/204). The Assembly, after taking note of the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, encouraged States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to continue to include a gender perspective in their reports to the Committee and invited the Committee to take into account a gender perspective in the implementation of its mandate (resolution 57/194). The Assembly also adopted a resolution on elimination of all forms of religious intolerance and continued to urge States to devote particular attention to all practices motivated by religion or belief that lead to violations of the human rights of women and to discrimination against women (resolution 57/208).

38. The General Assembly continued to address the situation of older women in society, reaffirming that the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, provided a broad spectrum of social, political and economic recommendations to improve the conditions of older women. It recognized that older women outnumber older men and that the situation of older women must be a priority for policy action and called upon Governments and the United Nations system to ensure that the needs, perspectives and experiences of older women are reflected in all development policies and programmes (resolution 57/177).

39. The Assembly continued to raise gender perspectives in the resolutions adopted on international cooperation against the world drug problem (resolution 57/174), the right to food (resolution 57/226) and promotion of a democratic and equitable international order (resolution 57/213).

40. The Assembly addressed the particular situation of women in many of its country-specific resolutions. It expressed deep concern at the violation of the rights of women, the harassment of women by security forces and the serious human rights abuses in the Sudan and called upon the Government of the Sudan to continue and to reinforce its efforts to prevent and stop the abduction of women and children, and upon the international community to expand its support for activities aimed at improving respect for human rights and humanitarian law, in particular those of the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (resolution 57/230). With regard to the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Assembly condemned the widespread use of sexual violence against women and children, including as a means of warfare and urged all parties to the conflict to implement all necessary measures to put an end to the widespread

violations of human rights and to impunity, in particular with regard to the sexual violence against women and children (resolution 57/233).

41. When addressing the question of human rights in Afghanistan, the Assembly invited the relevant bodies of the United Nations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to develop a human rights-based strategy addressing, inter alia, women's rights. It commended the steps taken by the Transitional Authority to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to guarantee the rights of women, welcomed the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and encouraged the Transitional Authority to provide the necessary support and resources to enable the Ministry to function effectively. It also expressed grave concern about recent attacks against women and girls, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced marriage, detention of women and girls for violating social codes and attacks on girls' schools (resolution 57/234).

42. The Assembly continued to stress the need for gender perspectives in connection with the situation of human rights in Myanmar (resolution 57/231) and in Iraq (resolution 57/232) and noted with serious concern the prison conditions in Cambodia and called upon the Government of Cambodia to take further measures to improve the conditions of detention, to provide proper food and health care to prisoners and detainees and to meet the special needs of women and children (resolution 57/225).

III. Economic and Social Council

43. The work of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2002 on the follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly was covered in the report of the Secretary-General to the Council (E/2003/69). The Council considered for the first time its new regular sub-item on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. A panel discussion held on 11 June 2002, with the participation of the Chairpersons/Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission on Science and Technology, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as well as senior officials of the Secretariat, identified progress made, good practices, gaps and challenges in reflecting gender perspectives in sectoral areas.

44. In its resolution on that issue (resolution 2002/23), the Council expressed its appreciation to its subsidiary bodies for the progress made in giving attention to situations specific to women and to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into their work, for example by identifying gender equality as an essential element for the realization of social, people-centred and sustainable development and emphasizing the link between human rights and gender equality. It called upon its subsidiary bodies to intensify their efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in their work and to continue their efforts to address gender perspectives in relation to the thematic issues of their multi-year programmes of work or in relation to annual themes. The Council invited its Bureau to consider, during meetings with the bureaux of its subsidiary bodies, progress made and obstacles encountered in gender mainstreaming. It also underlined the importance of presenting issues and

approaches in reports to intergovernmental bodies in a gender-sensitive manner to support gender-sensitive policy formulation. It encouraged the collection, provision and use by the United Nations system and its subsidiary bodies of data disaggregated by sex and other gender-specific information, as one of the means by which obstacles to the integration of a gender perspective can be monitored and addressed. It underlined the catalytic role played by the Commission on the Status of Women, in promoting gender mainstreaming.

45. In response to the Council's invitation to contribute input to its high-level segment, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women submitted a conference room paper entitled "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for eradication of poverty and sustainable development" that provided an overview of actions contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome document on the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, aimed at improving the situation of women in rural areas.

IV. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women of the Secretariat

46. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has continued to promote, facilitate and monitor gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system and intergovernmental processes. At the Secretariat level, the Special Adviser has focused on advocacy, providing briefings and advice to senior management to promote a greater understanding of gender mainstreaming, developing methodologies and tools on different sectors and issues, developing competencies and sharing best practices on gender mainstreaming.

47. The Office and the Division for the Advancement of Women supported the Department for Disarmament Affairs in developing a Gender Action Plan to mainstream gender perspectives into disarmament activities. The gender mainstreaming process in the Department for Disarmament Affairs covers all aspects of its work, including weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons, landmines and disarmament and development. The Action Plan builds on earlier collaboration between the Department and the Office of the Special Adviser in developing briefing notes entitled "Gender Perspectives on Disarmament".

48. The Office of the Special Adviser continued to collaborate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which prepared a strategic framework to mainstream gender perspectives in its work at Headquarters and in the field. A range of instructions on the behaviour of peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel in armed conflict areas and regulations to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace were developed. A total of five directives on procedures to handle disciplinary issues, allegations of serious misconduct and the behaviour of uniformed services (military and civilian police) were finalized. The Office of the Special Adviser works closely with the Civilian Police Adviser on recruitment and retention of women civilian police, including through a joint note verbale to police-contributing countries requesting more female officers. The Office supported the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that gender dimensions are included in the revised 2001-2005 strategy of the Service in

developing tools to integrate gender concerns into the five pillars of mine action. In the absence of a dedicated post of Gender Adviser in the Department, the Office of the Special Adviser provided support and advice to Gender Advisers in peace support missions. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs have deployed Gender Advisers to the four major peacekeeping operations — namely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Timor-Leste, Kosovo and Sierra Leone.

49. At the inter-agency level, the Special Adviser plays a catalytic role in mainstreaming gender concerns in the work of inter-agency forums, such as Executive Committees on Peace and Security, Humanitarian Affairs and Economic and Social Affairs. In the humanitarian field, the United Nations humanitarian community integrates gender perspectives in the development and implementation of humanitarian assistance activities through an action plan, thus building on the work already done by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

50. In supporting the implementation of gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system, the work of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, chaired by the Special Adviser, plays an increasingly important role. The Inter-Agency Network met in New York from 24 to 27 February 2003. The Network discussed emerging trends and challenges in the promotion of gender equality and ways and means to enhance integrated approaches through inter-agency cooperation. It emphasized the importance of integrated rather than sectoral approaches, for example in the areas of poverty and employment, access and use of information and communication technology, violence against women and the role of men, or in humanitarian crises where the issues of HIV/AIDS, drought and famine intersect.

51. Throughout the year, the Network worked through Task Forces on gender mainstreaming in programme budgets, gender and financing for development, integration of gender into the World Summit on the Information Society process, a gender analysis of the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, maintenance and expansion of WomenWatch and the development of gender indicators by the regional commissions. At its last session, the Network established new Task Forces on gender perspectives in the Millennium Development Goals, trade, and water, respectively. The Network also held a one-day workshop on incorporating gender perspectives into the preparation of and follow-up to global conferences.

52. In order to ensure high-level support and inter-agency coordination on gender mainstreaming, the Network maintains regular contact with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High-level Committee on Management and the High-level Committee on Programmes. A number of issues highlighted during the session were brought to the attention of the High-level Committees through the Chairperson, such as the importance of linking gender equality to all Millennium Development Goals, integration of gender perspectives into the follow-up to major world conferences and the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society, increased efforts to integrate gender perspectives in national and regional planning processes and full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security by all relevant actors.

53. At the Athens Forum on "Gender, Peace and Foreign Policy: The European Union Perspective", held in Athens from 28 to 30 May 2003, in the context of

Greece's Presidency of the European Union, the Special Adviser called on Member States to ensure, in a systematic manner, that women in post-conflict situations are fully empowered economically and to broaden the concept of assistance given by bilateral donors to a single seamless process in which women are equal partners with men in every area. At the meeting of the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces, "The Significance and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, Particularly in Military Contexts", held in Ottawa on 3 June 2003, the Special Adviser underlined that the synergy between the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and regional organizations, with their comparative advantages, offers new prospects for peacekeeping and peacemaking in the twenty-first century.

54. In the area of women, peace and security, major efforts, in cooperation with Governments, United Nations entities and civil society, have been made to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In the run-up to the second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), a meeting of the Security Council was held on 25 July 2002. The Special Adviser, addressing the Council, emphasized that sustainable peace and lasting security could not be achieved without women's empowerment and full involvement. The momentum created by the resolution was further amplified by preparations for the second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in October 2002, particularly by the report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (S/2002/1154) and the Secretary-General's study on women, peace and security, prepared by the Office of the Special Adviser in cooperation with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, which the Special Adviser chairs.

55. The study on women, peace and security gives a systematic overview of gender-related activities carried out by the United Nations system in peace-building, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. It highlights the impact of armed conflict on women and girls at every stage of conflict as well as the pervasive violence against women and girls during armed conflict that often persists as domestic violence and trafficking when conflict subsides. It highlighted the expanded role of women during conflict and the obstacles they face in contributing to a sustainable peace process. It sets out the gender perspectives at every phase of conflict and its resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Based on the findings of the study, the Secretary-General presented his aforementioned report on women, peace and security at an open meeting of the Council on 28 October 2002. He highlighted a 21-point programme for Security Council action for ensuring the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), such as participation of women in negotiations of peace agreements at the national and international levels. The debate in the Security Council resulted in the adoption of a Presidential Statement on behalf of the Security Council (S/PRST/2002/32).

56. Coordinated by the Office of the Special Adviser, a system-wide implementation action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was developed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security. The plan outlines the efforts being made by the United Nations system to monitor the implementation of the resolution. It covers all areas pertaining to mandates of United Nations entities identified in the resolution, including gender mainstreaming, training, humanitarian assistance, post-conflict cooperation and development, disarmament, gender-sensitive training, protection of women and girls in armed conflict, human rights, the girl child, constitutional and political aspects

and reproductive health. Under the action plan, the Office of the Special Adviser reviewed all Security Council resolutions, reports of the Secretary-General and Security Council mission reports from 2000 to present, a total of over 450 documents, for their gender content. The review revealed that very few of those documents reflect gender or women's specific concerns. The Office worked with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in preparing a roster of gender specialists. It also compiled a database on women's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in conflict zones. In cooperation with other members of the Inter-Agency Task Force, the Office coordinated the preparation of briefs for Security Council missions, e.g. to West Africa and the Great Lakes.

57. The Special Adviser continued to play a key role in advocacy and gender mainstreaming efforts to ensure attention to the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iraq. She works closely with other United Nations agencies and with the Afghan Ministry of Women Affairs and Afghan NGOs to enhance the incorporation of gender perspectives in recovery and development programmes in Afghanistan, including in the National Constitution and election processes. Specific advocacy and gender mainstreaming-related activities included a series of meetings and panels with high-level officials on the situation of women in Afghanistan and a joint workshop on "Gender and Post-conflict Reconstruction: Lessons Learned from Afghanistan" by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee Network on Gender Equality, held in Paris on 10 and 11 July 2003. In 2002, a staff member of the Division for the Advancement of Women was detailed to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan to act as interim Gender Adviser to the Special Representative. In the preparation for the Technical Consultation on Reconstruction Needs for Iraq, held on 24 and 25 June 2003, the Office of the Special Adviser worked with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security to ensure that gender concerns were raised in the technical sectoral meetings in such areas as social sector, infrastructure, livelihood and public administration.

58. Continued efforts have been made to ensure that gender perspectives were identified and integrated in the preparation for, and outcomes of, global conferences and summits. The Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women contributed to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002 and to the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on the Information Society.

59. Jointly with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Division for the Advancement of Women published a handbook for parliamentarians on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. The Special Adviser co-launched the handbook with the Secretary-General of IPU in April 2003 during the IPU Conference in Santiago, Chile.

V. Recommendations

60. **The following recommendations are presented to the General Assembly for its consideration.**

61. **The General Assembly may wish to call for continuing efforts to include attention to gender equality in reports submitted to the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies to enhance the analysis of gender perspectives and to further integrate gender perspectives in its resolutions.**

62. **The General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies may wish to take further steps to provide greater attention to the follow-up and implementation of the resolutions and decisions addressing gender equality and the empowerment of women. In so doing, it may wish to encourage further reporting on the extent to which progress has been achieved and identify areas requiring further attention.**

63. **The General Assembly may wish to take specific steps to ensure that gender perspectives are an integral part of all aspects of the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and to call for further attention to gender perspectives in the follow-up to and reporting on the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. It may also wish to encourage further systematic attention to gender perspectives in the preparatory process for and outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society.**

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[3] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[4] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 7* (E/2003/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution III.

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Advancement of women

Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 56/129 of 19 December 2001. It reviews the attention given to the situation of rural women by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, intergovernmental bodies and processes, the United Nations system and international financial organizations. The report concludes with a summary of the responses received from Member States on the desirability of convening a high-level policy consultation on the situation of rural women.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/129 of 19 December 2001, the General Assembly recalled the critical role and contribution of rural women in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty. It also noted the potential marginalization, as well as the benefits, resulting from the process of globalization for rural women. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution on the improvement of the situation of rural women at its fifty-eighth session.

2. The situation of rural women has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for the past two decades. Resolutions of the Assembly have covered the integration of a gender perspective in all rural development policies and programmes, legislative reforms to ensure access to resources and property rights, due recognition for rural women's work, capacity-building and training, and full participation in decision-making. Resolution 56/129 additionally emphasized the need to integrate a gender perspective in macroeconomic policies, promote programmes reconciling the work and family responsibilities of both women and men, and create an environment that does not tolerate violations of the rights of women and girls.[1]

3. The two most recent reports of the Secretary-General on this subject[2] focused on access to productive resources, inputs and services, and on further aspects of the situation of rural women in the context of globalization, such as the diversification of livelihoods, changing patterns of labour mobility and household dynamics.

4. The present report reviews the contribution of the relevant treaty body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to improving the situation of rural women. Article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women focuses specifically on the situation of rural women. The Committee's recommendations complement the efforts of intergovernmental bodies and processes, including summits and high-level conferences that have taken place since the submission of the last report in 2001, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002 and the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey in March 2002.

5. The report also reviews the preparatory process and the high-level segment of the 2003 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, which focused on promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development. The attention paid to the situation of rural women by the Commission on the Status of Women is outlined, as called for in resolution 56/129. The report briefly summarizes recent developments relating to some specialized agencies of the United Nations system and international financial institutions, namely, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Bank.

6. Finally, in response to resolution 56/129, the report reviews the responses received from Member States on the convening of a high-level policy consultation at the governmental level with a view to setting priorities and developing critical strategies that would meet the manifold challenges faced by rural women.

II. Key trends, challenges and recommendations resulting from the implementation of article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

7. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides a definition of discrimination and comprehensively addresses women's rights to equality and non-discrimination in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural fields. It requires States parties to incorporate the principle of equality in national law and take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination, whether committed by public authorities or by any person or organization. States parties are also obliged to adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination, establish legal protection for women on an equal basis with men and provide effective legal, administrative or other remedies against acts of discrimination against women. As at June 2003, 174 countries — 90 per cent of Member States — were States parties.

8. The Convention is the only human rights instrument that specifically addresses the situation of rural women. The Committee's review of States parties' reports has for the past two decades constituted a unique forum for assessing government policies and programmes aimed at the improvement of the situation of rural women.

9. Article 14 of the Convention obliges States parties to take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles rural women play in the economic survival of their families. States parties are to ensure that rural women participate in development planning and implementation. Rural women must have access to adequate health-care facilities and family-planning information, counselling and services, and benefit directly from social security programmes. The Convention covers their right to obtain education and training, including with regard to functional literacy, to benefits from community and extension services that would increase their technical proficiency and to participation in all community activities. Rural women are entitled to self-organization in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities and to have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities and technology, and equal treatment in land reform and resettlement schemes. States parties are obliged to ensure the right of rural women to enjoy adequate living conditions, including housing, sanitation, electricity, water supply, transport and communications.

10. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women monitors compliance of States parties with the provisions of the Convention. It considers reports in a constructive dialogue with the States parties and adopts concluding comments that include recommendations for further steps to be taken towards full implementation of the Convention. In response, many Governments have introduced new laws, policies and programmes, or amended those found to be discriminatory.

11. A review of 32 concluding comments adopted by the Committee during its eight most recent sessions, from 2000 to 2003,[3] indicates that the expert body consistently inquired into the situation of rural women, encompassing all issues and geographic regions. The Committee has commonly noted that although a significant population of women lives in rural areas, especially in developing countries, national policies rarely account for their important roles. It has emphasized that social investment in women not only ensures their enjoyment of the human rights outlined in the Convention, but also constitutes one of the most effective means of

combating poverty and promoting sustainable development in general. The Committee has therefore urged States parties to incorporate a gender perspective in all development programmes and to pay increased attention to the needs of rural women so as to ensure that they benefit from policies and programmes adopted in all spheres.

12. The Committee has also recognized the specific vulnerability of rural women, for whom discrimination on the basis of sex is compounded by other factors, such as the fact that they generally live in geographically less developed or even marginalized parts of a country and therefore face particularly difficult circumstances, such as poverty, low levels of education and literacy, and high unemployment. The Committee has confirmed the need for specific measures to empower rural women to overcome those constraints. Where applicable, the Committee has emphasized that minority women living in rural areas are even more disadvantaged and require particular attention.

13. The Committee has consistently called on States parties to develop special strategies, policies and programmes in priority areas for rural women and to allocate necessary budgetary resources. It has focused especially on their economic empowerment, as rural women are responsible for the largest part of rural and agricultural work, particularly in developing countries, but do not constitute the majority of resource owners. In its consideration of economic empowerment measures, the Committee has placed emphasis on the need to involve women in poverty alleviation programmes in developing and transitional countries.

14. The Committee has deplored the fact that women's work in rural areas is not considered productive labour and has urged States parties to recognize rural women's contributions to the economy and to ensure their access to credit, capital, employment and marketing opportunities, as well as to productive resources. It has stressed in particular the need for rural women's participation in land reform programmes and their full access to land and property, including through ownership, co-sharing, inheritance and succession. The Committee has directed its recommendations concerning land rights to transitional and developing countries in particular.

15. While the Committee has on occasion commended States parties for reforming land and agrarian legislation, it has expressed its concern that the implementation of such legislation has been impeded by persistent prejudices and the application of customary law and discriminatory practices that continue to prevent women from enjoying their right of access to resources. In this context, the Committee has likewise focused on the participation of rural women in local and national public decision-making, as a means of empowerment and of enhancing access to productive resources.

16. Women's greater economic empowerment and their participation in public life, particularly in decision-making, are also intrinsically linked to their social circumstances. The Committee has emphasized that rural women's empowerment and participation are hampered by their lack of access to health care, education and other social services, such as insurance. It has urged States parties to ensure adequate health care for rural women and to address the particular disadvantages they face due to lack of infrastructure and education, environmental pollution and customs and stereotypes. These can constitute barriers to rural women's access, for example, to family planning, contraception and disease prevention. This leads to

higher maternal and infant mortality and the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. The Committee has noted the disastrous effect of the spread of HIV/AIDS on rural women, due to their double burden as both caregivers and producers of food and goods. The Committee has called upon States parties to take steps to eliminate all practices that are harmful to the health of women and to introduce programmes to raise the awareness of rural women about their rights.

17. The Committee has focused on the low level of education and training of rural women, including the particularly high percentage of illiterate rural women, especially in developing countries. Consequently, it has urged States parties to make available special education and training measures, including agricultural extension services and literacy campaigns, and to ensure that women can use their education to obtain better positions and access to decision-making. The Committee has also called upon States to ensure that rural women obtain relevant training and access. This would ensure that rural women, who often suffer from isolation, could benefit from the personal and professional empowerment offered by technology.

18. The Committee has frequently been faced with insufficient information about the situation of rural women in States parties' reports and has had to request more data and a more comprehensive picture of the situation of rural women. It has called for additional research into the situation of rural women, as the lack of such information has prevented it from reviewing in greater detail States parties' compliance with article 14 of the Convention.

19. The Committee has identified specific areas in national policy, legislation and practice that require attention and the measures to be adopted in those areas. Its concluding comments are intended to enhance the implementation of the Convention in the States parties concerned. Among issues and concerns relating to rural women that are rarely raised in other forums, the Committee, complementing discussions by intergovernmental bodies and United Nations agencies, has, for example, addressed the effect of debt bondage in the context of land rights. It has also highlighted the impact of harmful local customs and practices that perpetuate discrimination, including societal and domestic violence. In this context, the Committee has also pointed to the situation of older rural women who suffer aggravated marginalization and isolation, which exposes them to greater risks of becoming victims of violence.

20. The Committee routinely requests reporting States to disseminate its concluding comments and to support their public discussion, in order to make politicians and government administrators, non-governmental organizations and the public at large aware of the steps required to ensure de jure and de facto equality for women. Follow-up to the Committee's comments thus provides an opportunity for States parties to initiate or intensify action to improve the situation of rural women. States parties could therefore also initiate discussions and share materials with other government bodies that deal with the improvement of the situation of rural women and are involved in follow-up to intergovernmental processes focusing on sustainable rural development, some of which are outlined below.

21. The Committee, in its concluding comments, does not specifically address global or regional developments or consider in detail the impact of macroeconomic policies or development programmes on the situation of rural women in a specific State party. However, in its statement submitted to the World Summit on Sustainable Development,[4] the Committee underlined the disproportionate effect on women of global economic development trends, noted women's disadvantages in benefiting

from economic and social development and pointed out that they suffer disproportionately from poverty, malnutrition and inadequate health care. The Committee noted that all of these phenomena were particularly severe in rural areas and made a series of recommendations for action, including for the specific benefit of rural women.

22. The Committee's work complements intergovernmental processes by putting forward strategies for action that address issues affecting rural women in the process of globalization. Many of the issues taken up by the Committee in its review of States parties' reports are similar to those discussed in intergovernmental forums, as outlined below.

III. Intergovernmental bodies and processes

23. The monitoring process under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women offers Member States that are parties to the Convention an effective tool to focus on action that they have taken or need to take to improve the situation of rural women and to enhance follow-up to intergovernmental processes. Since the submission of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of rural women, a number of intergovernmental bodies and processes have considered this issue within the context of their wider discussions on social development themes. They have generally acknowledged the role of rural women in development processes, but the extent to which they have provided specific recommendations for action to improve the situation of rural women varies.

24. The two most recent high-level events renewed commitments to partnerships between Governments, civil society and the private sector. These partnerships are important in the context of the increasing privatization of resources and services and the need for transparency and accountability. The high-level events also attempted to strengthen the coordination between organizations, institutions and agencies dealing with development issues. They confirmed that the issues regarding rural women that were already noted in other intergovernmental forums devoted to social development still require concerted and sustained attention and action.

A. High-level summits and conferences

1. International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, March 2002)

25. The International Conference on Financing for Development and its outcome document, the Monterrey Consensus,[5] marked a major attempt by the international community to actively mobilize financial resources for development, including through increased consultation with and coordination of relevant stakeholders. The Monterrey Consensus emphasized the need for a holistic approach as a response to current challenges.

26. The Monterrey Consensus also called upon Governments to mainstream the gender perspective into development at all levels and in all sectors. It called for gender-sensitive investments in basic economic and social infrastructure that are fully inclusive of the rural sector, in recognition of the importance of social and

economic aspects in combating poverty and ensuring sustainable development. The Consensus also recognized the importance of microfinance and microcredit schemes, including in rural areas, particularly for women, and advocated capacity-building and gender budget policies in developing countries.

27. The follow-up process to the Monterrey Consensus, which has already led to increased cooperation among the international financial institutions, the United Nations system and other actors in the field of development, should address a number of challenges, including through the inclusion of rural women or their representatives as important stakeholders in these processes.

28. Indeed, a comprehensive analysis of the impact of macroeconomic policy frameworks on the situation of women, in particular rural women in developing countries, is needed. Globalization, especially its trade liberalization and privatization aspects, continues to have an impact on women in rural areas and on their livelihoods in developing countries. While some rural women have benefited from new opportunities, the shift from subsistence agriculture to cash-crop production has also had, in certain cases, negative effects on household food security, access to resources and services, and the environment, disproportionately affecting rural women, who constitute the majority of the poor. The vital role women play in the economy and the rural agricultural sector should be specifically recognized. Policies and programmes aimed at the achievement of development goals, including those set out in the Millennium Declaration, should as a means to address the structural causes of discrimination, consider rural women both key beneficiaries of policies and programmes and stakeholders in decision-making processes.

2. World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, September 2002)

29. The Johannesburg Declaration[9] of the World Summit on Sustainable Development stressed Governments' commitment to ensuring that women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all the activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation[10] of the Summit. The Plan of Implementation, in addressing the protection and management of the natural resource base of economic and social development, recognized that agriculture plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of a growing global population and is intrinsically linked to poverty eradication, especially in developing countries. The Plan stated that enhancing the role of women at all levels of rural development, agriculture, nutrition and food security is imperative. Governments were called upon to support the contribution of all appropriate stakeholders, including both men and women, in rural planning and development, and to strengthen institutional frameworks for sustainable development at the national level, where women should be able to participate fully and equally in policy formulation and decision-making.

30. The Plan of Implementation recognized the specific role of women in conserving and using biodiversity in a sustainable way. With a view to changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, it was necessary to promote education to provide information for both men and women about available energy sources and technologies and to facilitate access to public information and participation by women at all levels in support of policy and decision-making related to water resource management and project implementation. In focusing on

health and sustainable development, the Plan called for assisting developing countries in providing affordable energy to rural communities, particularly to reduce dependence on traditional fuel sources for cooking and heating, which affect the health of women and children.

31. This renewed commitment is important in view of women's central role in natural resource management and the preservation of environmental security. Environmental degradation, natural disasters and the effects of unsustainable development have particularly affected rural women and girls. In particular, rural women suffer inequality in their access to water, sanitation and basic health services. In both developing and developed countries, services are being privatized, which may result in additional costs to the users. Rural women also tend to be at greater risk than men of being exposed to domestic toxic substances, due to unequal sharing of household responsibilities.

32. The Plan of Implementation also stressed the need for women's equal access, inter alia, to economic opportunity, land, property and credit. Referring in particular to sustainable development in Africa, it called for the promotion of and support for efforts and initiatives to secure equitable access to land tenure and clarification of resource rights and responsibilities, through land and tenure reform processes that respect the rule of law. It also called for access to credit that would enable women producers to become decision makers and owners in the sector, including the right to inherit land.

33. During the process of follow-up to the Summit, Governments will be striving to meet the challenges outlined in the outcome documents. One of those challenges is the need to work towards the practical implementation of previous outcome documents whose targets and objectives have yet to be met, including chapter 24 of Agenda 21,[8] the Millennium Declaration and the eight Millennium Development Goals. As confirmed by the Summit, the achievement of these goals is also intrinsically linked to improvements in the situation of rural women.

B. Economic and Social Council

34. The theme of the 2003 high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council — "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development" — provided an additional opportunity for Member States to consider at the intergovernmental level the situation of women within the context of integrated rural development.

35. The report of the Secretary-General to the Council dated 2 April 2003[9] focused attention on the role of rural women in its consideration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions, as well as questions of transparency and participation, that need to be considered in addressing this issue. The report emphasized, inter alia, that efforts to make improvements in the economic and environmental dimensions of integrated rural development had to take into account women farmers' considerable knowledge of local environmental resource management and food security issues. The appropriate use of modern technology, generally not made available to the poorest sectors of the rural population, which include the majority of rural women, was also deemed important. Improvements in the social dimension of integrated rural development could be effected by greater equality of access to health services,

including HIV/AIDS protection and care, educational facilities, participation in rural institutions and programmes that counteract social exclusion, especially that of older rural women.

36. The preparatory process for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council provided opportunities for dialogue between Member States, independent experts, non-governmental representatives and various actors within the United Nations system.[10] Within the framework of Economic and Social Council brainstorming dialogue sessions, a number of round tables covered the major social, economic, political and environmental aspects of integrated rural development, notably education, interconnections between HIV/AIDS and poverty, population and reproductive health, rural productivity, agriculture for the eradication of poverty, and rural energy development. In the discussions it was noted that issues are interconnected and need to be approached holistically: e.g., the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic should not be considered a health issue only, but should be seen as an important measure to reduce poverty and enable women to address disempowering relationships at home and in society at large. The conclusions stressed the need for women to be seen as agents of change in integrated rural development.

37. The ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session, adopted in Geneva on 2 July 2003,[11] stressed the need for rural development to become an integral part of national and international development policies and of the United Nations system's activities and programmes. It called for an enhanced role for rural women at all levels of rural development, including in decision-making, and included a focus on the priorities of rural women in the various themes it addressed. It emphasized the importance of recognition of their work, and their need for access to resources. It noted the effect of HIV/AIDS on rural women and the need for effective measures to combat the epidemic. It called for an overall approach that integrates the social, economic and environmental dimensions, takes into account the needs of local rural stakeholders, in particular women, and ensures a participatory process. The ministerial declaration renewed calls for speeding up the implementation of existing commitments.

38. The Economic and Social Council high-level segment and its preparatory process confirmed that effective strategies for integrated rural development need to recognize the continuing structural inequalities and rural women's limited access to and control over resources, services, markets and decision-making processes as major reasons for the increasing poverty among rural women. Integrated rural development, as a means of achieving internationally agreed development goals, can be effective only if it recognizes the important contribution women make to the production of agricultural goods, food security, natural resource management and, thus, overall sustainable development.

39. The empowerment of rural women requires their participation or representation in national and international institutions and decision-making processes, such as Common Country Assessments, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, as well as in consultation processes focusing on the implementation of commitments undertaken by intergovernmental processes.

40. The process of implementation of and follow-up to the ministerial declaration of the Economic and Social Council high-level segment will provide Governments,

the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations with further opportunities to increase their attention to the central role of rural women in development processes and to make them a key target group and focus, both as active agents of change and beneficiaries, of all policies and programmes. As agreed at the high-level segment, the 2005 substantive session of the Council will review the implementation of the ministerial declaration. The annual sessions of all of the Council's functional commissions provide important forums for enhancing the focus on rural women.

C. Commission on the Status of Women

41. The 1995 Beijing Declaration[12] and Platform for Action[13] and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly[14] in 2000 highlighted the importance of formulating specific programmes for the benefit of rural women, as well as integrating their perspectives into all policies and programmes in both developing and developed countries. The Commission on the Status of Women, as the body mandated to supervise and follow up on implementation, has taken the situation of rural women into account as a cross-cutting issue in its annual deliberations of specific areas of concern since 1996.

42. Resolution 56/129 invited the Commission to pay due attention to the situation of rural women in the consideration of the priority themes identified in its multi-year programme of work for the period 2002-2006. The four themes considered by the Commission in 2002 and 2003 have obvious connections to the situation of rural women, which is duly reflected in the agreed conclusions or outcomes of panel discussions and other meetings organized around these themes.

43. At its forty-sixth session, in 2002, the Commission focused on eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world. Recognizing that women and children often bear the greatest burden of poverty, the agreed conclusions on eradicating poverty called for the development of appropriate socio-economic policies that promote equal access to and control over resources and markets for poor women, including rural women. Governments and other stakeholders were requested to ensure that legislative and administrative reform processes promote rural women's rights to resources, in particular land, inheritance and financial services and benefits. In this context, the Commission requested that data on women's equal access to land and other property be included in United Nations reports.

44. The Commission also considered gender perspectives of environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters at its forty-sixth session, focusing on the empowerment of women, including rural women. A panel discussion on the theme pointed to the importance of using existing knowledge held by rural women and their networks. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission called for rural women's involvement in developing laws, policies, programmes and training initiatives relating to natural resource and disaster management. Women's equal access to resources, in particular land and property, and the empowerment of women as producers and consumers, were also underscored.

45. In its consideration of the priority theme of women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, a panel discussion at the forty-seventh session of the Commission, in 2003, emphasized the need to take

into account the particular vulnerability of rural women. Because of geographic and economic isolation and marginalization, rural women are often at greater risk of being subjected to violence, especially domestic violence, and trafficking.

46. The agreed conclusions on the Commission's second priority theme for 2003, women's participation in and access to the media and information and communication technologies (ICT), and their impact on, and use as an instrument for, the advancement and empowerment of women, while not specifically referring to the situation of rural women, called for the removal of infrastructure barriers that disproportionately affect women and pointed out the importance of finding ways to adapt information and communication technologies to the needs of poor women. A panel discussion pointed out the importance of the media, with radio, in particular, highlighted as a means for poor women, especially in rural areas, to obtain information and increase knowledge. Access for disadvantaged women to education and training, and to media- and ICT-based economic activities, including at the decision-making level, would enable them to use new technologies as an instrument for their advancement and empowerment.

47. With a view to enhancing attention to gender perspectives in the preparations for and final outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, the Commission also submitted its agreed conclusions as an input to this process. The preparatory process has already highlighted the digital and media divide between and within countries, including with regard to urban and rural populations. A focus on the situation of rural women, in both developing and developed countries, could emphasize their potential role as beneficiaries, but also as important stakeholders. The perspectives of rural women should be incorporated in the final outcome documents of the Summit.

48. The Commission on the Status of Women will continue to pay due attention to the situation of rural women in the monitoring of critical areas of concern and the consideration of priority themes at its future sessions, thus complementing the work undertaken by other intergovernmental bodies and processes and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. There are connections that should be explored by Governments in greater detail when the Commission deals with its priority themes for 2004-2006: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality; women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building; review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"; current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls; enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work; and equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

IV. Specialized agencies and international financial institutions: International Fund for Agricultural Development, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Bank

49. Since the submission of the last report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, there have been some new developments in the policies and programmes of a number of specialized agencies and international financial institutions, which ensure the practical application of evolving concepts relating to the role of women in rural development.

50. The new Strategic Framework of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for 2002-2006 considers addressing gender inequalities and building rural women's capacities as essential conditions for reducing poverty. The Strategic Framework also views empowerment, and the connections between political and economic empowerment, as critical factors. In evaluating its projects, IFAD has found that projects have been most successful when activities improve women's economic status and their organizational and decision-making capacities have been complemented by investments in assets, services and education, such as water supply, health and literacy initiatives.[15]

51. IFAD focuses on increasing women's access to and control over income and access to land, credit and improved market linkages; building women's knowledge and skills; strengthening women's organization and their representation in political bodies, and meeting women's practical needs. It supports sensitization measures to enable men and other sectors of local communities to engage with women as partners.[16] Future challenges for the Fund include increasing impact at the field level, measuring it effectively and achieving sustainability.

52. The Gender and Development Plan of Action (2002-2007) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), adopted in Rome in November 2001, presents a framework for mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of FAO. It is aimed at removing the obstacles to women's and men's equal and active participation in, and enjoyment of the benefits of agricultural and rural development. It emphasizes that a transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is an essential condition for people-centred sustainable agricultural and rural development. The Plan recognizes the full participation of women and men and equal access to productive resources as fundamental prerequisites for achieving food security for all. Production increases should be achieved without overburdening women farmers, and women's roles in international trade negotiations should be considered. The Plan also emphasizes specific requirements of rural women in situations of emergency and addresses activities specifically targeting women (e.g., microcredit and investment). The need for collecting sex-disaggregated data is also underlined.

53. The Plan incorporates the outcome of the High-level Consultation on Rural Women and Information, held in 1999. Its Strategy for Action, "Gender and food security — the role of information", stresses, inter alia, the important role of the media in bridging the rural-urban divide and in communicating a more accurate picture of the contributions of rural women and men to agriculture and the rural economy. It also emphasizes the importance of providing access to information and communication technologies for rural women and men. In its policy and programme

development. FAO has recently focused on the effect of HIV/AIDS on women and food security in rural areas.

54. In its 2002 publication *Reaching the Rural Poor, a Renewed Strategy for Rural Development*, the World Bank recognized the importance of integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of rural development as a cross-cutting issue. According to the World Bank, women represent up to 70 per cent of the rural poor and play a major role in the survival strategies and the economy of poor rural households. The new strategy calls for raising the profile of rural development efforts and addressing the issue in its entirety, fostering an enabling environment for broad-based and sustained growth, forging alliances between all stakeholders and addressing the impact of global developments on client countries. One of the underlying factors of success in agricultural development identified by the World Bank is that the needs of women must be built into programmes.[17] Non-farm economic activities are also considered as an important source of employment for rural women. The World Bank committed itself to paying close attention to women's demands and needs with regard to strengthening skills.[18]

55. A priority of the strategy is to help make institutions more responsive to the rural poor, and the activities of the World Bank will focus on strengthening the political voice of women and other groups.[19] One of its greatest challenges in the implementation phase, to be monitored and evaluated over the next five years, is to ensure that rural poverty is truly reflected in Bank-supported programmes and operations in the manner and form envisaged in the strategy.[20]

V. Convening of a high-level policy consultation: views of Member States

56. In response to resolution 56/129, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to Member States on 28 April 2003, seeking their views on the desirability of convening a high-level policy consultation at the governmental level with a view to setting priorities and developing critical strategies that would meet the manifold challenges faced by rural women. By 16 July, replies had been received from 29 Member States.

57. Argentina, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Thailand, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam supported the convening of a consultation or considered it very appropriate or highly relevant.

58. Greece, replying on behalf of the European Union[21] and the acceding countries,[22] and the Republic of Korea raised questions regarding the appropriate forum and/or the timing for considering the situation of rural women.

59. Greece believed that the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2003 provided the opportunity for such consultation and priority-setting. The European Union intended to promote the meaningful reflection of a gender-equality perspective in the high-level segment debate and its output, and to emphasize the benefits of an operational and action-oriented outcome, the implementation of which could be carefully monitored. The

European Union did not therefore see the need for a separate exercise until the implementation of the output of the high-level segment could be assessed.

60. The Republic of Korea stated that it would find it more acceptable for the deliberations on the improvement of the situation of rural women to be held in the Commission on Sustainable Development, FAO or IFAD, rather than in a separate high-level policy consultation convened at the governmental level. It further believed that the holding of consultations in those forums would not detract from the goal of according priority to the articulation of strategies in meeting the challenges faced by rural women.

61. A number of Member States that supported the convening of a consultation also provided additional suggestions for topics to be addressed. Cambodia stated that the discussions would help in the formulation of further strategies to improve the livelihood of women in rural areas and to ameliorate poverty. Fiji replied that the high-level policy consultation approach would focus required international attention on the conditions and situations women face in rural areas and could elaborate monitoring mechanisms and means to implement commitments contained in both the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals. Malaysia stated that the consultation would provide Member States with a platform for developing more effective and appropriate policies, strategies and programmes in the process of the economic and social development of women in rural areas.

62. Mexico stated that a consultation could provide the opportunity to exchange experience in programmes concerning rural issues that had shown results. It would be important to know more details about the objectives, modalities and expected results of the consultation. The results of the Third World Congress of Rural Women, held in Spain in 2002, could be taken into account by such a forum.

63. The Philippines suggested that, in order to derive maximum benefit from the event, country papers could be prepared and submitted before the consultation. Such an arrangement would give the Secretariat an idea of the wide range of accomplishments and issues faced by Member States. The papers would also serve as a basis for preparing a more focused agenda for the consultation. Priorities and strategies should address rural electrification, sanitation and housing as part of infrastructure development in the rural setting, and clear social safety-net programmes and community-based support systems to help people withstand adverse economic environments, and respond to short-term emergencies as well as long-term concerns. The Philippines also stated that the United Nations might consider having a parallel consultation with non-governmental organizations and/or requiring Member States to undergo a multisectoral national consultation in the preparation of their respective country papers.

64. The United Republic of Tanzania found merit in the proposal of convening a high-level policy consultation at the governmental level with a view to setting priorities and developing critical strategies that would address challenges faced by women in rural areas.

65. Thailand believed that the United Nations should develop policies with global application to support education and vocational training for women in rural areas with a view to, inter alia, preventing rural women from falling victim to trafficking.

66. A number of Member States that supported the convening of a consultation provided additional comments. Chile stressed the importance of sustainable rural

development. China stated that women play a critical role in enhancing social development and achieving gender equality, with women in rural areas accounting for an overwhelming majority. The improvement of the situation of women in rural areas would not only further promote the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, but also contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. Colombia stated that rural women made an important contribution to agricultural and rural development and played a fundamental role in ensuring food security.

67. Fiji stated that the need to address issues affecting women had to be looked at in its totality. It required an appropriate international environment that would mobilize political will and resources to bring about change and/or increase the momentum of change in the various countries. The commitments of countries at the global and regional level were well acknowledged, yet their enforcement had not progressed at a desirable speed. This was largely due to a lack of political commitment, as well as inadequate monitoring mechanisms.

68. Malaysia stated that poverty had become a global issue demanding the attention of all Member States. It was therefore imperative to empower rural women to enable them to actively participate in all spheres of life within the terms of the basic principles set out in the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women.

69. A number of Member States that supported the convening of a consultation provided additional information on their countries' own involvement in this area, or on regional initiatives. Colombia stated that it had been considered a pioneering country regarding public policy on rural women because of its 2002 Law on Rural Women, which took into account the demands and suggestions of rural women.

70. The Dominican Republic replied that it had started a national consultation through regional meetings with rural women in order to identify outstanding difficulties and find solutions. The second phase of this consultation would be implemented with government bodies dealing with the agricultural sector at the national level, and would culminate in a meeting with all public institutions carrying out programmes in rural areas that have an impact on the situation of women. The results of the consultation would be published for use as the basis for future policy and action and forwarded to the United Nations.

71. Jordan stated that attention to the situation of rural women was included in the preparation of the plans and programmes of the Arab Women's Organization. Policies and priorities had been established for programmes and plans in accordance with the guidelines set out in relevant documents, and the priorities centred on education, information and law.

72. Madagascar referred to the strategic orientations in its national policy for the advancement of women for a balanced development of men and women. The improvement of the situation of rural women was the focus of this policy, and Madagascar was committed to making rural women real actors and beneficiaries of development. Panama stated that measures undertaken gave particular attention to the situation of rural women in national, regional and global development strategies. The Philippines stated that a consultation was consistent with initiatives of its current Administration on poverty alleviation and women's empowerment, particularly for rural areas.

73. A number of Member States submitted additional materials. Argentina and Lebanon submitted comprehensive reports on the situation of rural women in their countries. Jordan submitted the concept of the planning and policy committee for programmes and activities of the Arab Women's Organization, the Amman Declaration and final communiqué, and the Arab Women's Organization's strategy for improving the conditions of Arab women. Panama submitted a report on the measures taken to implement the outcomes of United Nations summits and conferences. Tunisia submitted its national action plan for rural women. The United Republic of Tanzania provided a short presentation on government action in relation to the situation of women in general and those in rural areas in particular.

74. The General Assembly may wish to take the views expressed by Member States into account when giving further consideration to the desirability of convening a high-level policy consultation at the governmental level.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

75. **Discussions at the intergovernmental level, including the recent Summit on Sustainable Development and International Conference on Financing for Development, the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the discussion in the Commission on the Status of Women, have led to a greater focus on the situation of rural women and enlarged the existing body of recommendations, especially regarding the need to integrate the needs of rural women into the development of programmes. The important role of rural women at the policy and decision-making level was cited in the ministerial declaration of the Economic and Social Council high-level segment.**

76. **The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has been an important monitoring mechanism of all aspects of the situation of rural women, focusing on the implementation of policies and programmes in both developed and developing countries and promoting enhanced emphasis on the implementation of treaty obligations and other commitments. Renewed attention to compliance with treaty obligations can complement and enhance follow-up to intergovernmental processes. Because of the complementarity of the discussions in various bodies and processes, follow-up is most effective when undertaken in a coordinated manner.**

77. **Governments, international organizations, including those of the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations should use the concluding comments and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women when formulating policies and designing programmes focused on the improvement of the situation of rural women.**

78. **Governments should ensure that the Committee's concluding comments and recommendations from intergovernmental processes are shared with all government bodies directly involved in sustainable rural development programmes, so that they are aware of existing treaty obligations and recommendations aimed at improving the situation of rural women and can be actively involved in implementation and follow-up.**

79. **Governments and international organizations, including those of the United Nations system, should ensure that:**

(a) **the integrated process of follow-up to the major summits and conferences in the economic and social field, in particular the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the International Conference on Financing for Development, focuses explicitly on the situation of rural women;**

(b) **the process of follow-up to the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council considers rural women as the key stakeholders in sustainable rural development. The priorities of rural women should be addressed in all policies and programmes, and rural women should be consulted and involved in the formulation of policies and programmes;**

(c) **the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva and Tunis addresses the priorities and needs of rural women and ensures their participation in developing and implementing global information and communication technology strategies;**

(d) **the perspectives of rural women are taken into account, and they participate in all areas, including in emergencies, humanitarian activities, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.**

Notes

[1] Resolution 56/129, para. 6 (a), (f) and (h).

[2] A/54/123-E/1999/66 and A/56/268.

[3] Twenty-second session (January 2000): Belarus, Burkina Faso, the Congo, Germany, India, Jordan, Myanmar; twenty-third session (June 2000): Cameroon, Cuba, Iraq, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, Romania; twenty-fourth session (January/February 2001): Egypt, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan; twenty-fifth session (July 2001): Guinea, Nicaragua, Viet Nam; twenty-sixth session (January/February 2002): Estonia, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago; twenty-seventh session (June 2002): Suriname, Tunisia; exceptional session (August 2002): Armenia, Uganda, Yemen; twenty-eighth session (January 2003): Albania, the Congo, Kenya.

[4] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38), part one, paras. 422-429.

[5] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[6] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[7] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[8] Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 focuses on global action for women, including the increased participation of women in decision-making, the need for sex-disaggregated data, education and capacity-building, equal sharing of household tasks by women and men, adequate health-care facilities, employment opportunities, and the establishment of rural banking systems with a view to facilitating rural women's access to credit, land and other resources.

[9] E/2003/51.

[10] These included the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Office and the World Health Organization.

[11] See E/2003/L.9.

[12] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[13] Ibid., annex II.

[14] Resolutions S-23/2, annex, and S-23/3, annex.

[15] See "Women as agents of change", IFAD discussion paper, February 2003, p. 9.

[16] Ibid.

[17] *Reaching the Rural Poor: A Renewed Strategy for Rural Development*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 15.

[18] Ibid., p. 19.

[19] Ibid., p. 23.

[20] Ibid., pp. 29, 30 and 32.

[21] Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

[22] Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

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Operational activities for development

Advancement of women

Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, prepared pursuant to Assembly resolution 39/125 of 14 December 1984.

Summary

The present report provides a review and update of the programmes and activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the year 2002. The report tracks UNIFEM overall progress and highlights concrete results in the implementation of its Strategy and Business Plan (2000-2003) during the year under review. The report concludes with a set of recommendations on how UNIFEM programmes can be further strengthened.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a review and update of the programmes and activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for 2002. The report tracks UNIFEM overall progress and highlights concrete results in the implementation of its Strategy and Business Plan (2000-2003) during the year under review. The report concludes with a set of recommendations, based on a review by the UNIFEM Consultative Committee, on how UNIFEM programmes can be further strengthened.

2. In its third year of implementation, the UNIFEM Strategy and Business Plan continued to operate in a global context, characterized by an increasing number of opportunities and challenges, with major consequences for women's lives. The opportunities presented by continuous global commitments to gender equality, evidenced by the acknowledgement of Governments of the centrality of women's empowerment to all other development priorities, presented key entry points for the organization to support implementation and accountability. At the same time, the uneven benefits from economic globalization, an increase in intra-State and inter-State conflicts and the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS posed significant threats with increasingly distinct gender dimensions. UNIFEM programmes responded to these challenges by striving to build a better understanding of their impact on women's lives and empowering women to play an active role in identifying solutions and taking advantage of new opportunities.

3. In keeping with General Assembly resolution 56/201 of 21 December 2001 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system UNIFEM placed strong emphasis in 2002 on learning and evaluation — engaging in programmatic and thematic assessments to identify valuable lessons and further strengthen its initiatives on the ground. The findings demonstrated, in particular, the continuous need for UNIFEM to advocate for increased implementation and enhanced accountability mechanisms for gender equality. As a result, the Fund has expanded and strengthened its programmes in support of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which now serves as the cornerstone of all UNIFEM rights-based programming, and accountability mechanisms, such as gender-responsive budgets and improved data collection to better track progress towards gender equality.

4. In addition, UNIFEM has increasingly used United Nations coordination mechanisms to influence mainstream processes and promote greater United Nations commitment to gender analysis and gender-responsive actions at the country level. In 2002, UNIFEM provided inputs into 21 common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) exercises and chaired or co-chaired inter-agency thematic groups in 15 programme countries. The United Nations system's strategic collaboration around the Millennium Development Goals, especially, the formulation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal Core Strategy and necessary alignment of poverty reduction strategies with the Goals, also provided new entry points for UNIFEM to demonstrate the centrality of gender equality to both human development and human security processes.

5. The year 2002 was the second of the three-year term of the current members of the UNIFEM Consultative Committee. Members of the Committee provided valuable guidance and advice to the organization and continued to further strengthen the link between their deliberations and recommendations and larger intergovernmental processes. In 2002, the Consultative Committee briefed the Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) Executive Board on UNIFEM programmes, highlighting results and advancing recommendations to further strengthen the organization.

II. Programme

A. Overview

6. As defined in its Strategy and Business Plan (2000-2003), the substance of UNIFEM's work focuses on three main objectives: (a) strengthening women's economic security and rights; (b) enhancing women's leadership in governance and peace-building; and (c) promoting women's human rights and eliminating violence against women, including highlighting the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. UNIFEM programming in 2002 not only increasingly reflected the interconnected nature of its three thematic areas, but also benefited from greater cross-regional synergies and focus. Two crucial factors have had a significant impact on the effectiveness of UNIFEM programmes, notably the quality and breadth of its partnerships and the willingness of other United Nations agencies and Governments to upscale UNIFEM innovations.

B. Strengthening women's economic security and rights

7. UNIFEM's work on strengthening women's economic security and rights is designed to respond to the challenges of economic globalization. As globalization influences economic opportunities worldwide, its impact remains uneven, creating both opportunities and risks for different groups. While opportunities have been generated for some local producers and entrepreneurs to reach international markets, for many poor women existing inequalities have been intensified, often translating into the loss of livelihoods, social benefits and labour rights.

8. In response to these trends and opportunities, including action on the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015, UNIFEM's programme in support of women's economic security and rights achieved significant progress towards the three key results in 2002 set out below:

1. Strengthened institutional, legal and regulatory environment for women's equal ownership and access to economic resources

9. UNIFEM has been expanding its work on gender-responsive budgets, taking advantage of the strategic opportunities and tools it offers for promoting accountability towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In 20 countries, the programme provides technical support for capacity-building, promotes partnerships among key actors and facilitates learning across initiatives. In 2002, given a strong trend towards decentralization in many countries, UNIFEM

increasingly supported gender budget initiatives at the municipal level, while also continuing national and sectoral budget analyses. In the Andean region, for example, gender budget analyses were completed in municipalities in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. In Ecuador, as a result of a UNIFEM-supported budget exercise, the Municipality of Cuenca has allocated resources for gender equity in the 2003 budget that are 15 times higher than those in the 2001 budget. In Quito, the Mayor made a commitment to increase resource allocations to sectors benefiting women in 2003 and guidelines have been distributed to all municipal departments. UNIFEM is also contributing to better availability of resources to support skill-building and expanded expertise worldwide, through publications, such as *Gender Budget Initiatives: Strategies, Concepts and Experiences*, presentations of lessons and experiences at regional and international meetings and collaboration in sharing knowledge with other agencies, including UNDP, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International Development Research Centre and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GTZ).

10. Critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals is also the availability of reliable and gender-sensitive data that can be used to inform situational analysis and the design of policies and programmes. During the reporting period, UNIFEM intensified efforts to build skills, technical capacities and commitments within Governments to develop and collect gender-sensitive statistics. In Cuba, for example, the National Statistics Office, with support from UNIFEM and UNDP, conducted its first national time-use survey. The results show that, when adding up women's total hours of paid and unpaid work, women spend many more hours working than men. The findings, disseminated by the National Statistics Office, are expected to inform future policy formulation. UNIFEM also continued to advocate for new and stronger legislation, policies and programmes in support of women's economic security, focusing on women's right to property, credit, social protection and other economic and social resources. In Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, UNIFEM has been collaborating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to strengthen social protection systems for home-based workers, supporting mapping surveys and developing draft legislation. In Senegal, a UNIFEM-supported pilot case study will provide guidelines for the protection of women's intellectual property rights in the context of various patent regimes.

2. Engendered macroeconomic frameworks and strengthened country capacity to manage globalization and economic transition from the perspective of poor women

11. In 2002, UNIFEM continued its work on mainstreaming gender perspectives into trade polices and promoting better understanding of the differential impact of trade agreements on women and men. In China, for example, UNIFEM supported research to explore the differential impact that accession to the World Trade Organization may have on women and men in agriculture and industry. Study results will be used to advocate for the integration of a gender and rights approach in the revision of laws and regulations in the World Trade Organization accession. In Africa, UNIFEM, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Commonwealth Secretariat, supported the Economic Community of West African States to develop more gender-equitable trade policies. UNIFEM also facilitated the formation of two regional networks in Africa and Latin America, bringing together gender equality advocates with the aim of integrating gender

perspectives into the preparations and follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development.

3. Strengthened women's capacity and rights as entrepreneurs, producers and home-based workers

12. UNIFEM's work on strengthening women's economic capacity focuses on enlarging opportunities within an economic sector or subsector. Access to training and technology, learning to negotiate agreements with potential partners and service providers and understanding national and international markets enables women to improve their products and businesses, making the best use of emerging opportunities. Field-based programmes in 2002 were increasingly designed to enhance women's use and control of information and communications technologies, with support now being provided to initiatives in 15 countries. A regional initiative, "Africans in the Digital Diaspora" has been building linkages with African business leaders to promote an enabling environment for women's access to information and communications technologies. In China, UNIFEM and the All-China Women's Federation co-sponsored the first International Forum on Women's Entrepreneurial Development and a Trade Fair for Women Entrepreneurs. Nearly 600 women executives, entrepreneurs and farmers from China and other countries and regions participated in the discussions, resulting in the conclusion of more than 50 business deals at the two events. In Nigeria, a national forum for women entrepreneurs led to the establishment of a support fund for women entrepreneurs. The Fund, managed by UNIFEM with private sector contributions, will be used to provide women entrepreneurs with better resources on financial management, markets, technology and training opportunities.

C. Enhancing women's leadership in governance and peace-building

13. UNIFEM promotes women's leadership to ensure that women have an equal voice in shaping the policies that affect their lives. UNIFEM's work in this area focuses on peace and security, by promoting assistance to women in conflict situations and supporting their participation in peace processes, and on gender justice, by strengthening institutional mechanisms, legislation and policies in support of gender equality. During 2002, UNIFEM's work in these areas achieved the following five significant results.

1. Strengthened gender focus in information collection and exchange to improve prevention and early warning mechanisms

14. Mitigating the impact of armed conflict on women requires an understanding of how conflicts affect women and girls differently from men and boys. While field-based programmes are the centrepiece of UNIFEM peace and security initiatives, the organization has also invested significantly in strengthening gender perspectives in information collection and exchanges of experiences. The main focus in 2002 was the completion and launch of *Women, War, and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building* (volume 1 of *Progress of the World's Women* 2002). UNIFEM commissioned this publication as a contribution to the follow-up to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and a companion to the report of the Secretary-General on the subject. Two independent experts undertook 14 missions to document women's

voices and lived experiences as survivors, peace-builders, and aspiring policy makers, in conflict and post-conflict situations. Since the second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), launches have been held in the European Parliament in Brussels, with United Nations agencies in Geneva, as well as in Africa and Asia. Cooperation between UNIFEM and UNDP is also further developing in this area, gaining particular momentum following a joint workshop in 2002, at which lessons learned from both organizations' gender and post-conflict work was discussed and areas for future collaboration explored.

2. Improved protection and assistance for women affected by conflict

15. Women and girls are often neglected in the delivery of protection and assistance during conflict. In 2002, UNIFEM programmes in this area focused especially on preventing gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. In Sierra Leone, for example, UNIFEM developed a partnership with UNFPA, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to improve protection and knowledge about the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS in post-conflict situations. A UNIFEM adviser, supported with funds from UNAIDS and UNFPA, is providing technical assistance to policy makers and local women's groups. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UNIFEM advocated the need to address women's psychosocial needs, and assisted in devising a strategy of support to community centres where coaching, training and technical assistance for women can be provided.

3. Making women and gender perspectives central to peace processes

16. UNIFEM supports women's participation in peace-building and helps to leverage the political, financial and technical support needed for these efforts to have an impact on peace processes nationally, regionally and internationally. In the southern Caucasus, UNIFEM's programme for linking national level initiatives to a stronger regional momentum for peace has been recognized as a model. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia the project is supporting the formation of women's peace clubs and councils to increase women's voice and leadership in advocating for an end to conflict. In Colombia, a year-long process of consensus-building among the country's five regions and across its diverse women's movement has led to the development of a common agenda that includes proposals for both the pre-negotiation and negotiation stages of the conflict. UNIFEM support to the National Mobilization of Women Against the War has been catalytic in assisting five of the country's most important women's networks to develop a unified voice in calling for peace. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNIFEM continued to support the work of the women's caucus to influence the peace negotiations. UNIFEM collaborated closely with the facilitator's office to support the participation of 67 women delegates and experts to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and facilitated a consultation meeting in Kinshasa.

4. Expanded support for enhancing gender equality and women's rights in post-conflict peace-building

17. Recognizing that the opportunities to engender policies and laws in post-conflict situations are significant, UNIFEM's work in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Timor-Leste is building on and generating new insights about effective ways of promoting women's leadership and gender mainstreaming in post-conflict situations.

In Afghanistan, UNIFEM's work in 2002 focused on supporting civil society organizations to advocate for gender justice and strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. To enhance the Ministry's outreach to women in rural areas, UNIFEM has been supporting the establishment of women's centres in eight provinces. UNIFEM's support to building gender equality in Kosovo has led to greater collaboration between the Government, parliamentarians, civil society and bilateral partners in developing a plan of action for women's empowerment. At the municipal level, UNIFEM's work, supported by the efforts of other gender equality advocates, contributed to the Municipal Assembly in Prizren adopting legislation exempting women heads of households (many of them war widows) from paying property taxes. Likewise in Prizren, the local government now pays for its female employees to enrol their children in kindergarten.

5. Strengthened gender focus in electoral, constitutional, legislative and judicial processes

18. UNIFEM-supported efforts in 2002 also contributed to strengthening gender justice in electoral, constitutional, legislative and judicial processes in many countries. UNIFEM is building women's capacities as candidates and voters, judges and lawyers and in national women's machineries to promote gender equality legislation. Increases in women's political representation resulted from support provided by UNIFEM and other donors to women candidates in Burundi, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Morocco. In Morocco, for example, UNIFEM support to the women's movements contributed to the adoption of a quota for women, resulting in an increase from 2 to 35 women parliamentarians in the new parliament. UNIFEM also supported the launch of a regional Southern African Development Community Women's Parliamentary Caucus in Angola, aimed at transforming national parliaments and dismantling structural barriers and institutional practices that make it difficult for women parliamentarians to become effective legislators.

D. Promoting women's human rights and eliminating violence against women, including by highlighting the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

19. Women's human rights are central to all UNIFEM programmes and are mainstreamed into all of its subgoals. At the same time, a number of programmes focus specifically on building capacity, awareness and compliance with globally agreed norms and standards to advance women's human rights. In 2002, UNIFEM noted progress towards three key results, as set out below.

1. Expanded capacity to eliminate violence against women and girls by investing in prevention, protection and advocacy strategies

20. UNIFEM links innovative efforts to end violence against women to opportunities to replicate and scale up successful strategies. UNIFEM programmes in 2002 focused on strengthening integrated responses to violence against women through better research and data on the causes and prevalence of violence, building capacities to formulate and implement effective legislation and policies, strengthening regional-level action and learning and building awareness of policy

makers and the public about the urgency of ending this pandemic. In India, UNIFEM, in collaboration with Zonta International, published a series of resource directories to improve networking and access to services for women victims of violence; by the first quarter of 2003, the project will have mapped support services for violence survivors in 12 states. In Ecuador, UNIFEM is working with the national women's machinery, el Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres (CONAMU) to support the development of a Provincial Plan on Violence against Women, spearheaded by the Municipality of Guayaquil and is also contributing to the formulation of a national plan on ending violence against women. An inter-institutional committee has been formed to develop the plan, consisting of the Mayor, a Councilwoman, UNIFEM, UNFPA, the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Oxfam and CONAMU. In addition to UNIFEM-executed programmes, UNIFEM also manages an Inter-agency Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995 in 1996. The Trust Fund generates lessons and good practices that inform larger programmes of UNIFEM and its partners at the national, regional and global level. The Trust Fund has awarded US$ 7.8 million in grants to 147 initiatives in over 73 countries. The seventh grant-making cycle of the Trust Fund, in 2002, provided slightly over $1 million to 18 initiatives in 22 countries. UNIFEM reviewed more than 267 proposals with requests of over $15.5 million. Joining Finland, Italy and Japan as donors to the Trust Fund in 2002, the Government of Germany has contributed funds to a regional funding mechanism, which will build capacities of Governments and women's organizations in four countries in Central Asia to coordinate efforts to address violence against women.

2. Increased effectiveness at the country level in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

21. The Convention serves as the cornerstone of all UNIFEM rights-based programming. While the Convention and other human rights instruments are increasingly being integrated into all thematic areas, UNIFEM has placed special emphasis on programming that supports its implementation. In Brazil, a national campaign, supported by UNIFEM and other donors, contributed to creating an enabling environment for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. UNIFEM programmes in 2002 also focused on integrating the Convention's principles into domestic legislation and translating the Convention into local cultural contexts. In Kazakhstan, UNIFEM supported the development of a national action plan to implement the observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and in Kenya, UNIFEM support contributed to a new draft constitution that clearly articulates women's human rights.

3. Better understanding of the gender and human rights dimensions of HIV/AIDS

22. In 2002, UNIFEM programming on HIV/AIDS further evolved from a concentration on piloting and capacity-building to a focus on policies and advocacy. With support from the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security and other bilateral and multilateral donors, UNIFEM launched programmes in 10 countries to strengthen the capacities of national AIDS councils to programme from a gender and human rights perspective. The programmes also support the review of legislation and policies to identify the factors that assist or prevent women's equal access to

treatment and care. UNIFEM has also been building new partnerships with networks of HIV positive women in India and Zimbabwe, with youth advocates in the Caribbean, southern Africa and Senegal, and with faith-based networks in Kenya and Nigeria. Moreover, UNIFEM deepened and expanded partnerships within and outside the United Nations system. Building on their longstanding collaboration, UNIFEM and UNAIDS launched in 2002 the first electronic portal on gender and HIV/AIDS. UNIFEM and ILO have been collaborating on a cross-regional project to address the unpaid care work performed by women coping with HIV/AIDS. In 2002, UNIFEM participated in 13 HIV/AIDS inter-agency thematic groups in the field, advocating for a stronger gender dimension in their work.

E. Enhancing the capacity of the United Nations system to support the empowerment of women and gender-mainstreaming in policies and programmes

23. UNIFEM's work in support of gender equality in the United Nations system has been influenced by a number of factors: the Secretary-General's reform agenda and update, emphasizing increased coordination and stronger action on human rights; the coalescing of the United Nations system and Member States around coordination mechanisms, including the Millennium Development Goals, common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, poverty reduction strategy papers, and others; and lessons learned from UNIFEM pilots in support of gender-mainstreaming processes in United Nations coordination mechanisms. In 2002, UNIFEM catalytic support to gender equality and women's rights initiatives in the United Nations system achieved three results, as follows:

1. Increased and more focused support to the implementation of the United Nations reform agenda

24. In its decision 2002/20 adopted on 27 September 2002, the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board reaffirmed the UNIFEM mandate to support the United Nations system and called upon the organization to promote gender mainstreaming throughout the operational activities of the United Nations system, in the context of the resident coordinator system and in particular within the common country assessment and the national poverty alleviation strategies, including the poverty reduction strategy papers and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes. During the reporting period, UNIFEM provided inputs into 21 common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework exercises, including in four of the five roll-out countries for the mechanism. In the Philippines, for example, the gender theme group, backstopped by UNIFEM, conducted an assessment of the gender dimensions of the country's key development challenges (for the common country assessment) and prepared a subsequent strategy paper to guide the United Nations country team during the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process. UNIFEM also supported efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into other coordinated planning efforts, including the Joint Action Recovery Programme for Somalia, the United Nations system's Humanitarian Action Plan for Colombia and the poverty reduction strategies in Niger and Senegal. In addition, UNIFEM, as chair of the gender task force on common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) for the Inter-Agency Network on Women

and Gender Equality, coordinated an assessment of 15 CCA/UNDAF exercises and joined in a UNICEF-led assessment of CCA/UNDAF initiatives in West Africa. The assessments have resulted in a concrete set of recommendations for strengthening gender mainstreaming in the CCA/UNDAF processes.

25. UNIFEM has also been promoting the use of inter-agency thematic groups on gender as key mechanisms for strengthening gender mainstreaming in United Nations system initiatives. The 2002 resident coordinator annual reports indicated that there were 47 gender theme groups. UNIFEM chaired or co-chaired thematic groups in 15 countries and supported efforts to strengthen theme groups in many other countries. In Nigeria, for example, UNIFEM facilitated the development of gender-sensitive monitoring indicators for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework to allow the United Nations country team to track progress towards gender equality in priority areas of United Nations support in the country. In Zimbabwe, UNIFEM led the preparation of a gender issues paper as part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework joint mid-term review. At the global level, UNIFEM and UNDP are planning to undertake a scan of gender theme groups in 2003 to collect good practices and develop a capacity-building strategy.

2. New agreements and deepening collaboration to strengthen gender equality with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes

26. UNIFEM has also been strengthening strategic collaboration with key United Nations partners in areas of common concern. Over the past year, UNIFEM and UNDP have further deepened their unique relationship — building on their distinct mandates and identities — to support local, national, regional and global efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. UNIFEM collaboration with UNDP has increased and grown in effectiveness, spurred by the Fund's ability to execute projects for UNDP and strong support from the UNDP Administrator. In 2002, UNIFEM executed 14 projects for UNDP (4 of which were signed in 2002) and began work on developing execution arrangements for an additional 6 projects. In addition to strengthening its partnership with UNDP, UNIFEM also continued to develop closer institutional relationships with other United Nations agencies. During the past year, UNIFEM signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Fund for Agricultural Development to mainstream gender dimensions into the West African Rural Development Hub. Collaboration with UNFPA has also been expanding in all regions, especially in ending violence against women, strengthening women's national machineries, mainstreaming gender into HIV/AIDS strategies and bringing a gender dimension to peace and security initiatives. Moreover, UNIFEM's strong partnerships with UNAIDS continues to generate innovative field-based programmes, including an inter-agency programme with the Government of India to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. Work with ILO and the United Nations Children's Fund has also been expanding, especially related to HIV/AIDS strategies and new partnerships have been built with UNHCR in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Ecuador.

3. Stronger linkages between UNIFEM's operational activities and intergovernmental processes

27. UNIFEM worked closely with other United Nations agencies to ensure visibility and inclusion of gender and women's rights issues in intergovernmental arenas throughout 2002. As in previous years, the Commission on the Status of

Women provided an important space for UNIFEM to build stronger linkages between its programmes (and constituencies) in the field and normative deliberations at headquarters. UNIFEM organized a series of briefings for United Nations agencies and Government delegations on gender and macroeconomics, specifically focused on the gender implications of fiscal and monetary policies and gender dimensions of trade negotiations. UNIFEM also supported the participation of non-governmental organizations from all regions at meetings of the Commission, and hosted a meeting of the African Women's Caucus enabling the group to meet with and dialogue with United Nations agencies gender focal points. Throughout 2002, UNIFEM also further strengthened its interaction with the Security Council. UNIFEM opportunities to engage in high-level advocacy, using the independent experts' assessment as the clarion call for attention to women's interests and contributions in war and post-conflict countries, are formidable. UNIFEM has developed an ambitious strategy, including a series of book launches, to ensure that the insights and recommendations contained in the publication reach a wide audience. In July 2002, the Executive Director of UNIFEM addressed the Security Council during an open debate on women, peace and security calling upon the Council to systematically recognize women, peace and security as a regular issue of concern in its deliberations (see S/PV.4589 and Corr.1).

F. Strengthening the Fund's effectiveness by incorporating the principles of a learning organization and building strategic partnerships

28. UNIFEM believes that in a learning organization, staff members need to be provided with the opportunities and skills to continually expand their capacities to produce the results embodied in the organization's mission and mandate. In 2002, UNIFEM initiated a wide range of internal and external assessment and review processes to enhance innovation and learning. At the same time, the organization expanded the breadth of its partnerships and capacity-building opportunities in order to deepen understanding and know-how towards achieving gender equality. In 2002, UNIFEM achieved the following key results:

1. Improved communication strategies to raise awareness of the "how-to" of achieving women's rights and gender equality

29. In 2002, UNIFEM completed work on a two-volume set of its biennial flagship publication entitled *Progress of the World's Women*. Volume 1 (entitled *Women, War and Peace*) presents an independent experts' assessment of the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peace-building, and volume 2 (entitled *Progress of the World's Women 2002*) provides an update of data and statistics on commitments to gender equality. The books serve as key advocacy tools to support UNIFEM programming and the programmes of partners. They capture good practices, achievements, challenges and gaps in particular areas of importance to women's lives. UNIFEM has also been increasingly using audio-visual and electronic resources to draw attention to progress made and challenges faced in achieving gender equality and to provide access to knowledge in a variety of themes. In 2002, UNIFEM re-launched the <end-violence> electronic working group, with the participation of over 2,000 activists and advocates, and supported a Gender-AIDS electronic forum that attracted over 2,000 members to strategize on

mainstreaming gender perspectives into the fourteenth International AIDS Conference held in Barcelona in July 2002. The UNIFEM web site received approximately 70,000 unique users monthly in 2002, an increase of about 20 per cent since 2001.

2. **Strengthened strategic partnerships that underpin the transmission of knowledge to widening constituencies**

30. Strategic partnerships are at the very core of UNIFEM efforts to ensure that people understand why gender equality is central to development and how they can join in efforts to achieve it. Central among these partnerships to increase learning are innovative partnerships with the media. In 2002, UNIFEM continued to support regional and global media and advocacy efforts, including campaigns on ending violence against women in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Latin America, and media advocacy activities on gender and HIV/AIDS in West Africa and the Caribbean. A campaign to end violence against women in the Commonwealth of Independent States resulted in more than 1,000 media reports, with an estimated reach of 250 million people. A training workshop for journalists on gender aspects of HIV/AIDS held in Dakar brought together 120 media representatives from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal and Togo. In Kazakhstan, UNIFEM created an award for young journalists reporting on gender issues. The winner is awarded a scholarship for a master course in journalism at a reputable TV company in Almaty.

3. **Strengthened capacity and systems to support innovation and learning**

31. Continuing from 2001, UNIFEM paid special attention to closely linking reporting, evaluations and assessments to learning, strategic planning and programme development. In preparation for its next Strategy and Business Plan, UNIFEM undertook 15 evaluations, assessments and mid-term reviews during 2002, including a series of regional scans on ending violence against women, a desk review of work on women's leadership and political empowerment and a learning-oriented assessment focused on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in post-conflict situations. UNIFEM also coordinated a multi-stakeholder assessment of women's empowerment in post-conflict situations, with a particular focus on Rwanda. The learning-oriented assessment brought together six bilateral donors, national Government and civil society partners and UNDP to identify lessons for effective UNIFEM strategies and better coordination of gender equality initiatives in post-conflict situations. In addition, UNIFEM established an Innovation and Learning Unit and an internal knowledge-sharing strategy to better support staff learning. The strategy promotes more tactical use of the UNIFEM Intranet, electronic communications and interregional exchanges. Since the start of its Strategy and Business Plan, UNIFEM has more systematically been tracking the extent to which its initiatives generate replication and upscaling. In 2002, the Fund was able to identify 18 examples in which Governments, civil society organizations and/or United Nations agencies replicated or upscaled UNIFEM-supported innovations. In addition, UNIFEM resources, such as *Picturing a Life Free of Violence*, which provides access to visual resources on ending violence against women, have been reproduced and adapted by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

III. Financial management

32. The UNIFEM Strategy and Business Plan (2000-2003) established ambitious targets for the organization to reach $40 million in total resources by the end of 2003. Over the last three years, the Fund has seen an increase in financial contributions, growing from $26.6 million in 2000 to $34.6 million in 2002. Resource growth has resulted from multi-year cost-sharing contributions to thematic programmes, particularly on gender budgets, peace and security initiatives and HIV/AIDS. However, while this has enabled the organization to increase the scope and breadth of its initiatives, the relative stagnation in core resources — at approximately $20 million annually — creates pressure on its infrastructure and capacity to respond to unanticipated opportunities, including increasing demand from Governments, women's organizations and United Nations partners.

33. The UNIFEM strategy to expand and diversify its resource base has focused on (a) strengthening and expanding partnerships with bilateral donors around areas of common concern; (b) leveraging funds for gender equality and women's rights through new partnerships with multilateral agencies; and (c) exploring opportunities to develop partnerships with socially responsible private sector entities. While achievements have been noted in all of these areas — although not as much progress in the latter as hoped — a more intensive push and broader community of support will be needed to attract necessary resources.

34. In 2002, contributions from bilateral donors accounted for approximately 88 per cent of the UNIFEM resource base, down from 92 per cent in 2001. Contributions from its top three donors — the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands — increased between 2000 and 2002, owing in part to commitments to support UNIFEM's work in Afghanistan. In all, 40 Governments contributed to UNIFEM in 2002. Partnerships with United Nations agencies, especially UNAIDS, UNDP and UNFPA, have also contributed to an increase in resources in 2002.

35. UNIFEM has also been building stronger partnerships with foundations and socially responsible private sector companies. Pledges in 2002 increased to an all-time high of $3 million, due primarily to an arrangement with the United Nations Foundation to match donor contributions. Through the Executive Director's participation in the Global Peace Initiative, a group of women from the private sector and civil society organizations formed a Global Women's Business Council to promote women's entrepreneurship and peace. The Council is supporting UNIFEM to raise resources for a Women's Business Centre in Afghanistan and to connect Rwandan women basket makers — who are survivors of the genocide — to markets in the United States of America. While small steps have been taken and constructive partnerships have developed, UNIFEM recognizes the importance of further expanding efforts to collaborate more closely with private sector partners. In 2002, UNIFEM further expanded support to its network of national committees. The majority of these committees signed a new recognition agreement in 2002, whereby they were called upon to increase membership and resource mobilization efforts to reach a higher level of annual contributions. Through a grant from the Swiss Agency for International Development Cooperation, UNIFEM will continue to assist its national committees in 2003 in developing strategic plans to strengthen their organizational structures.

IV. Recommendations

36. The UNIFEM Consultative Committee, which is comprised of five Member States (Croatia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Namibia and the Netherlands) appointed by the President of the General Assembly, provides key recommendations to the organization each year. Recommendations of the forty-third session of the Committee included the following:

- The Consultative Committee encouraged UNIFEM to continue its important work in the field of peace and security by ensuring follow-up to the recommendations contained in the independent experts' assessment and the report of the Secretary-General. To this effect, the Committee recommended that UNIFEM collaborate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs to devise a joint strategy on how implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) can be guaranteed.

- The Consultative Committee concluded that, given UNIFEM's increasing involvement and expertise in HIV/AIDS and post-conflict crises, among others, a wider interpretation of the violence against women focus appears warranted. In this regard, the Committee invited UNIFEM to continue to undertake innovative and catalytic activities in these fields, and for this purpose, to consider expanding the scope of the existing Trust Fund on Violence against Women.

- The Consultative Committee took note of General Assembly resolution 57/276 of 20 December 2002 related to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and, in that regard, invited UNIFEM to mainstream the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action into its programme of work.

- The Consultative Committee recommended that UNIFEM continue to foster and build strategic partnerships, both within and outside the United Nations system, so as to broaden its audience and ultimate impact, both at field and headquarters levels. Such partnerships should contribute to sufficient attention to gender equality and women's rights issues within Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction strategy papers and common country assessments/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

- The Consultative Committee strongly encouraged UNIFEM to strengthen its work in tracking progress on the gender dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals in close collaboration with UNDP, the official scorekeeper for the Goals, and encouraged the Administrator to involve UNIFEM in the areas of its comparative advantage.

- The Consultative Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on reform an outstanding opportunity for UNIFEM to consolidate its role as a catalyst in order to ensure gender equality through gender mainstreaming in the United Nations overall system of development cooperation. The Committee encouraged UNIFEM to keep apprised of and

involved in reform discussions, and likewise recommended that UNIFEM's view be solicited and taken on board in these discussions.

- The Consultative Committee welcomed UNIFEM's work in collaboration with UNDP on mapping gender expertise in the United Nations system. UNIFEM was invited to elaborate on the qualitative aspects of the scan in addition to the quantitative aspects, perhaps with partners in evaluation, and to share its findings with the United Nations system, as well as with the Development Assistance Committee working party, so as to bring together expertise within the United Nations system to better understand good practices and challenges in achieving gender equality. The Committee encouraged United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to cooperate in this venture and to enhance the dialogue in gender thematic working groups.

- The Consultative Committee recommended that UNIFEM develop creative and cost-effective ways to expand and improve its use of media and communications, including information technologies, on the understanding that communication and dissemination in a low-technology environment is equally important as the use of high-technology avenues.

- The Consultative Committee appreciated the distribution of resources for new projects as proposed in the UNIFEM finance report and endorsed the focus on Africa.

- The Consultative Committee strongly encouraged donors to consider devoting a greater share of their contributions to the UNIFEM core budget, and to adopt multi-year funding frameworks. This would contribute to predictability and thus, to stability. Growth should be achieved first and foremost through effectiveness. The Committee appreciated UNIFEM's performance in this regard and encouraged UNIFEM to maintain its course.

- The Consultative Committee encouraged UNIFEM to further explore the possibilities of private sector funding for some of its activities, including contributions from foundations.

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Advancement of women

Traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/128 of 19 December 2001, the present report provides information on the measures taken by Member States and within the United Nations system to implement that resolution, as well as efforts reported by civil society organizations. The report identifies areas in which further efforts are needed.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/128 of 19 December 2001, on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the resolution, including examples of national best practices and international cooperation. The present report[1] is submitted in accordance with that request. It is based, inter alia, on information received in response to a request of the Secretary-General from Member States and United Nations entities.

II. Measures taken at the national and regional levels

2. As at 20 May 2003, 28 Member States had responded to the Secretary-General's request for information.[2] Several Member States, including Malaysia, Morocco, San Marino and Saudi Arabia, reported that no harmful traditional or customary practices existed in their respective countries.

A. Legal measures

3. Some Member States reported on legal measures directed specifically at female genital mutilation. Cyprus reported on a bill, submitted to its House of Representatives, to prohibit genital mutilation, which would carry penalties of up to eight years' imprisonment. Denmark described a proposed bill, which would introduce a specific provision against female genital mutilation in the Criminal Code, and establish Danish jurisdiction in criminal cases involving female genital mutilation committed by a Danish citizen or resident in countries where the practice may not be considered a criminal offence. Italy reported on several proposed bills, including Chamber of Deputies Act 150 on measures concerning the prohibition of sexual mutilation practices, and Senate Act 566 on amendments to the Penal Code, and measures concerning the prohibition of sexual mutilation practices. Spain reported on a draft law, referred to the legislature for consideration, which would introduce explicit mention of female genital mutilation in the Penal Code, with possible penalties of six to twelve years' imprisonment.

4. Some Member States, including Austria, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Ghana, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain and Yemen, described existing legal provisions against female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices. Egypt described several Ministerial Decrees prohibiting the practice. Ghana reported on several laws, including the Law against Female Circumcision, the Law against Harmful Widowhood Practices and the Law against Ritual Servitude. Italy reported that several articles of its Penal Code provided for indictments and sentences to be brought against perpetrators of genital mutilation, treating the practice as a type of aggravated personal injury. Lebanon reported that strict enforcement of its existing laws had resulted in the elimination of traditional or customary practices in the country. New Zealand described a recent amendment to its Crimes Act, which criminalized female genital mutilation. Senegal reported that excision was a criminal offence under its Penal Code, punishable by a term of imprisonment ranging from six months to five years. Senegal also reported that the practices of levirat[3] and sororat[4] were prohibited by its Family Code. Spain reported

that its Congress of Deputies had approved a bill on measures for the elimination of female genital mutilation in 2001, which provided for the inclusion in all official forms for permits and foreign registration cards of a leaflet informing applicants that genital mutilation was considered a crime in the country. Yemen reported on a Ministerial Decision prohibiting health service workers from performing female genital mutilation. Austria and Germany reported on criminal provisions that eliminated any possible legal defence of consent, including the consent of the victim, in regard to female genital mutilation. Austria and the Netherlands reported on legal provisions and medical board disciplinary measures against medical practitioners who take part in female genital mutilation. Germany and New Zealand described criminal provisions targeting those who remove children to a foreign country for the purpose of circumcision.

5. Some Member States, including Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Syrian Arab Republic and Thailand, reported on proposed legislative measures and existing laws on women's health and/or violence against women and children in general.

B. Policy, awareness-raising and education measures

6. Denmark reported on the publication of a report on female genital mutilation in 2002 by a working party comprising representatives from various ministries, including the Ministries of Justice and Education. The working party made recommendations for an upcoming national initiative against female genital mutilation, including information campaigns aimed at health, education and childcare professionals, as well as at groups in which female genital mutilation is practised. Egypt described a ruling by the National Syndicate of Egyptian Doctors prohibiting doctors from performing the procedure. Egypt also described the launch, in 2003, of a project to eliminate female genital mutilation by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, in collaboration with various Government bodies and non-governmental organizations. Among other objectives, the project aims to support advocacy, empower girls at risk and address the sociocultural roots of female genital mutilation. Entitled "The FGM Free Village Model", the project's activities include implementing a marketing and advertising campaign based on defined behavioural targets and impact indicators; implementing community service initiatives with incentives for family participation in project activities; and developing an anti-female genital mutilation tool kit that can be customized to meet the needs of different communities. Egypt reported that an infomercial against female genital mutilation had been aired on national and regional television.

7. Germany reported on awareness-raising initiatives against female genital mutilation and highlighted its cooperation with non-governmental organizations, for example, by sponsoring a brochure aimed at immigrant populations. Ghana provided information on the adoption of policies and programmes addressing negative cultural practices, including educational sensitization programmes on female genital mutilation and on the establishment of a national committee on harmful traditional practices which aimed, among other objectives, to document and disseminate best practices in the prevention and elimination of such practices. Italy reported on the publication, in 2001, of a handbook on female genital mutilation for health care, social and educational workers. The Netherlands reported on its integrated approach to female genital mutilation, with emphasis on prevention and education, and

prosecution as a final resort. The Netherlands also described awareness-raising, research and training initiatives on the practice. New Zealand described initiatives addressing female genital mutilation, including the implementation of an education project in the Auckland region, the updating and implementation of guidelines on health care and child protection, and the education of communities affected by the practice. Norway reported on its Plan of Action against female genital mutilation, adopted in 2001. Among other objectives, the Plan aimed to prevent girls in Norway from being exposed to the practice, establish cooperation with non-governmental organizations and individuals on the issue, and contribute to eliminating the practice internationally. Norway also reported on the presentation, in 2002, of a strategy document to combat female genital mutilation. Portugal noted that a proposed national plan against domestic violence would also address female genital mutilation in immigrant communities, establish guidelines for in-depth studies on the specific problems of immigrant women and encourage awareness-raising activities on harmful traditional practices aimed at immigrant communities. Qatar reported that most of the customary practices affecting the health of women and girls no longer existed, owing to increased education and health awareness. Senegal described its Plan of Action for the elimination of female genital mutilation for the period 2000-2005, as well as awareness-raising, sensitization, and training initiatives against other harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage, levirat and sororat. Spain described training and awareness-raising initiatives concerning female genital mutilation, including the implementation of information campaigns on the harmful effects of the practice targeted at immigrant populations, and the publication of a pamphlet on female genital mutilation. The Syrian Arab Republic reported on programmes and activities on reproductive health, which raised awareness of the harmful effects of traditional practices. Yemen reported that its Ministry of Social Security and Social Affairs had incorporated efforts to raise awareness and mobilize public opinion on the harmful effects of traditional practices into its programmes and projects.

8. Member States, including Belarus, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, the Philippines, Senegal, Spain and Thailand, described policy and programmatic measures addressing violence against women and children and/or women's health in general.

C. International cooperation

9. Member States, including Denmark, Egypt, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, highlighted their cooperation with other Member States and non-governmental organizations to combat harmful traditional practices. Denmark reported that it provided financial support to the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in Egypt for the aforementioned "FGM Free Village Model" project; the National Committee for the Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation in Burkina Faso for its information campaigns and local committees; and to the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices in Benin for information campaigns, local committees and the education of ex-circumcisers. Denmark also supported a programme for the rehabilitation of women who had been branded as witches in Northern Ghana. Germany reported on its endorsement of the joint statement on female genital mutilation by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund. It also reported that it was

assisting those three organizations through financial support, active advocacy of the goals of the joint statement in international organizations and bilateral policy dialogue. Germany supported several organizations and initiatives to combat female genital mutilation. Particular mention was made of a regional project covering Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Mali and Senegal, which involved the use of information campaigns targeted towards girls and women, as well as towards those who perform circumcision. The Netherlands reported that it had introduced the resolution on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly in 2001. It supported several projects in developing countries to combat harmful traditional practices through advocacy, lobbying and media campaigns. Norway indicated that it would continue to focus on female genital mutilation in multilateral contexts and that it planned to intensify bilateral cooperation with African Governments working against female genital mutilation.

D. Efforts reported by civil society[3]

10. It was reported that, in 2002, a young couple in Ethiopia had publicly opposed female genital mutilation in their nationally televised wedding ceremony, and that 285 villages in Senegal had decided to stop practising female genital mutilation. Information was provided on an alternative rite of passage in Kenya called "Circumcision by Words", and it was reported that in the United Republic of Tanzania, 126 Maasai community elders had declared their support for an alternative rite of passage. Information was also provided on a workshop held in Kenya in 2002 to share strategies against female genital mutilation, where participants discussed using a human rights framework to combat female genital mutilation, as well as factors that perpetuated the practice, such as culture, patriarchy and poverty. Several non-governmental organizations had organized a conference on female genital mutilation at the European Parliament in Brussels in 2002 and had launched an appeal and an international signature petition against the practice.

III. Measures taken within the United Nations system

A. General Assembly

11. At its fifty-sixth and fifty-seventh sessions, the General Assembly adopted several resolutions referring to harmful traditional practices, including resolution 57/181 of 18 December 2002, on the elimination of all forms of violence against women, including crimes identified in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". By resolution 57/179 of 18 December 2002, on working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour, the Assembly expressed concern at the continuing occurrence in all regions of the world of crimes committed against women in the name of honour. Among other recommendations, it called upon all States to investigate promptly and thoroughly, prosecute effectively and document cases of such crimes and punish the perpetrators; and to intensify efforts to raise awareness of the need to prevent and eliminate such crimes, with the aim of changing the attitudes and behaviour that allow for them to be committed. Further, it called upon

States to encourage, support and implement measures and programmes aimed at increasing the knowledge and understanding of the causes and consequences of such crimes, including the provision of training for those responsible for enforcing the law; and to establish, strengthen or facilitate, where possible, support services to respond to the needs of actual and potential victims.

12. By resolution 57/189 of 18 December 2002, on the girl child, the Assembly expressed concern that the girl child was often subjected, inter alia, to violence and harmful practices, such as female infanticide, early marriage and female genital mutilation, and urged States to enact and enforce legislation to protect girls from all forms of violence, including female infanticide and female genital mutilation, and to enact and strictly enforce laws ensuring that marriage was entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses, as well as laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage. A similar resolution was adopted by the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session (resolution 56/139 of 19 December 2001).

13. In the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly on children (resolution S-27/2, annex, of 10 May 2002), the Assembly set out its resolve to protect children from, inter alia, all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence and, as part of the strategies and actions to achieve these goals, to end harmful traditional or customary practices, such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

B. Commission on Human Rights

14. In its resolution 2003/45 of 23 April 2003, on the elimination of violence against women, the Commission on Human Rights affirmed that the term "violence against women" meant any act of gender-based violence that resulted in, or was likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including, among others, crimes committed in the name of honour, and traditional practices harmful to women, including female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages, female infanticide and dowry-related violence and deaths. It strongly condemned physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including, inter alia, dowry-related violence, female infanticide, female genital mutilation, crimes committed against women in the name of honour, crimes committed in the name of passion, traditional practices harmful to women and early and forced marriages. It emphasized that violence against women and girls, including, inter alia, female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage, could increase their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The Commission called upon States to condemn violence against women and girls and not to invoke custom, tradition or practices in the name of religion or culture to avoid their obligations to eliminate such violence. The Commission adopted a similar resolution in 2002 (resolution 2002/52 of 23 April 2002).

15. By its resolution 2003/53 of 24 April 2003, on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Commission called upon States to investigate promptly and thoroughly all cases of killings committed in the name of passion or in the name of honour, bring those responsible to justice before a competent, independent and impartial judiciary and ensure that such killings were neither condoned nor

sanctioned by Government officials or personnel. The Commission adopted a similar resolution in 2002 (resolution 2002/36 of 22 April 2002).

16. By its resolution 2003/86 of 25 April 2003, on the rights of the child, the Commission called upon all States to take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and all forms of violence, including harmful traditional or customary practices, such as female genital mutilation, the root causes of son preference, marriages without free and full consent of the intending spouses and early marriages, by enacting and enforcing legislation and, where appropriate, formulating comprehensive, multidisciplinary and coordinated national plans, programmes or strategies protecting girls. The Commission adopted a similar resolution in 2002 (resolution 2002/92 of 26 April 2002).

C. Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

17. In its resolution 2002/26 of 14 August 2002 on traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls, the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights appealed to all States concerned to intensify efforts to develop awareness of, and mobilize national public opinion concerning the harmful effects of all forms of harmful traditional practices, in particular through education, information and training, in order to achieve the total eradication of those practices. It appealed to the international community to provide material, technical and financial support to the non-governmental organizations and groups working with dedication to achieve the total elimination of those cultural practices, which were harmful to girl children and women. It also requested that all non-governmental organizations dealing with women's issues continue to devote part of their activities to the study of harmful traditional practices and ways and means of eradicating them. Further, the Subcommission reiterated its proposal that three seminars be held, in Africa, Asia and Europe, to review the progress achieved since 1985, and ways and means of overcoming obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Elimination of Harmful Traditional Practices affecting the Health of Women and Children (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/10/Add.1). It appealed for funding for those activities and requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist the mandate by raising funds for the organization of the seminars.

1. Special Rapporteur of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights on traditional practices affecting the health of women and the girl child

18. In her sixth report on the situation regarding the elimination of traditional practices affecting the health of women and the girl child (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/32), submitted to the Subcommission at its fifty-fourth session in 2002, the Special Rapporteur noted the increasing involvement of European countries against female genital mutilation. She described measures taken by Denmark, Norway and Sweden against female genital mutilation and reported on meetings and consultations held in Brussels, Madrid and Vienna on the practice. She welcomed the growing awareness of the so-called receiving countries, but emphasized the need for any policy on female genital mutilation to be conducted with respect for the traditions and culture of the populations concerned.

19. The Special Rapporteur indicated that national activities included alternative employment opportunities for women who perform excisions, training and information programmes and publication of research work and studies. She reported on national initiatives against female genital mutilation in various African countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, the Sudan, Togo, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. She also reported on meetings held in Benin, Mali, Niger and Uganda, bringing together traditional chiefs and religious leaders to discuss their roles in combating the practice, and noted the work of some non-governmental organizations to actively involve African Governments, strengthen local activities and widen regional cooperation. The Special Rapporteur reported on several regional and international initiatives, including a resolution on female genital mutilation adopted by the European Parliament in 2001, a discussion panel organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union at the 106th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, held in Ouagadougou in 2001, and a consultation organized by herself and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices on the exportation of certain harmful traditional practices, particularly female genital mutilation, into so-called receiving countries, held in Geneva in 2002.

20. The Special Rapporteur agreed with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences[6] on the importance of involving women as full participants in the struggle against harmful traditional practices. Organizations, such as the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices, had long realized the value of women's participation. Agreeing with the report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief[7] that cultural practices harmful to women were at variance with religion, she indicated that emphasis should be given to the valuable contribution made by religious leaders in Africa to the struggle against female genital mutilation and other harmful practices. The Special Rapporteur further emphasized that only compulsory education of girls up to the age of 17 would make it possible to terminate the practice of early marriage and recommended that Governments promulgate laws to that effect with incentive provisions for parents, particularly in rural areas and with mechanisms for the application of sanctions.

21. The Special Rapporteur stressed that female genital mutilation, crimes of honour, forced marriages and other practices would not be eradicated until women were considered as full and equal members of their communities. She emphasized that the various policies and actions aimed at terminating harmful practices had to be directed towards strengthening women's status in society from the earliest age.

2. Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences

22. In her report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session (E/CN.4/2003/75), the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, emphasized that the regulation of female sexuality continued to be one of the underlying causes of many practices constituting violence against women. She noted that the doctrine of cultural relativism presented the greatest challenge to the elimination of harmful practices and that, what she termed "the arrogant gaze of the outsider" often made difficult the fight to eradicate cultural practices that were violent towards women. She emphasized the importance of

consulting and working with women in the countries concerned to ensure that the most effective strategy was adopted.

23. In an addendum to her report (E/CN.4/2003/75/Add.1), the Special Rapporteur documented the persistence of harmful traditional or customary practices in various countries. She reported that some African countries had enacted legislation to criminalize female genital mutilation, although there was less action on other traditional practices, including widowhood rituals, payment of bride price and widow inheritance. She indicated that traditional practices, such as early and forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of honour and female genital mutilation undermined women's rights in the Arab region. She also indicated that, in some Arab countries, advocacy campaigns had been successfully organized to address gender-based violence, including its more sensitive forms of female genital mutilation, and honour killings. She reported that some European countries had enacted specific legislation against female genital mutilation, but that few had collected statistics on the practice.

24. In her report to the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2002/83), the Special Rapporteur reported on cultural practices in the family that were violent towards women, including female genital mutilation, honour killings, witch hunting and forced and early marriage. She emphasized that such practices were based on a society's belief that the freedom of a woman, especially with regard to her sexual identity, should be curtailed and regulated. Among other measures, she recommended that States develop penal, civil and administrative sanctions in domestic legislation to punish violence in the family and to provide redress to women victims, even if the violence was associated with a cultural practice; that States develop national plans of action to eradicate violence in the family, particularly violence relating to cultural practices, through health and education programmes at the grass-roots level; and that States adopt all appropriate educational measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct that foster such practices.

3. Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on freedom of religion or belief

25. In an addendum to his report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-eighth session (E/CN.4/2002/73/Add.2), the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief considered the status of women in the context of religion and traditions and reviewed several harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation, food taboos and other practices related to women's health; early and forced marriage, levirat, polygamy and other practices related to women's status within the family; honour killings, widow cruelty and other practices related to violations of the right to life; deuki,[8] trokosi[9] and other practices related to violations of dignity. The Special Rapporteur recommended preventive measures, such as education and training, legal reform, international cooperation and information collection on traditional or cultural practices. He also recommended protective measures, including application of the law, and reinforcement of relevant international instruments, organizations and existing mechanisms to combat such practices.

4. Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

26. In her report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session (E/CN.4/2003/3), the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions reported that she continued to receive reports of women being murdered in the name of honour, but limited herself to act where the State either approved of or supported those acts, or permitted institutionalized impunity to the perpetrators, or impunity by giving tacit support to the practice. She stressed that Governments had to end systematic and institutional impunity for those who killed women in the name of honour and so-called morality.

27. In her report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-eighth session (E/CN.4/2002/74), the Special Rapporteur indicated that the main reason for the perpetuation of the practice of "honour killings" was the lack of political will by Governments to bring the perpetrators to justice. She urged Governments to make legislative changes to ensure that such killings received no discriminatory treatment under the law and to sensitize their judiciary to gender issues. She also urged that those threatening the life of a female victim be brought to justice, and that correctional and custody homes run by Governments be prohibited from forcibly detaining women whose lives were at risk. The Special Rapporteur also addressed the issue of honour killings in her report on her mission to Turkey (E/CN.4/2002/74/Add.1).

5. Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

28. In his report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session (E/CN.4/2003/58), the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health listed harmful traditional practices as one of the factors that compounded the vulnerability of women to ill health. The Special Rapporteur stressed that States had an obligation to ensure equal access of men and women to the enjoyment of all rights, including by ensuring equality and non-discrimination in areas such as political rights, marriage and family, employment and health.

D. Human rights treaty bodies

29. The human rights treaty bodies continued to address harmful traditional or customary practices in their work. In its General Comment No. 28 concerning article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the equality of rights between men and women, adopted at its sixty-eighth session in 2000,[16] the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties should ensure that traditional, historical, religious or cultural attitudes were not used to justify violations of women's right to equality before the law and to equal enjoyment of all their rights under the Covenant. The Committee requested States parties to furnish appropriate information on those aspects of tradition, history, cultural practices and religious attitudes which jeopardized, or might jeopardize, compliance with article 3, and to indicate measures they had taken or intended to take to overcome such factors. The Committee requested States parties to report on measures taken to protect women

from practices that violated their right to life, such as female infanticide, the burning of widows and dowry killings. The Committee also requested that, in States parties where the practice of female genital mutilation existed, information be provided on its extent and on measures taken to eliminate it. The Committee emphasized that the minimum age of marriage should be set on the basis of equal criteria for men and women that ensured women's capacity to make an informed and uncoerced decision. It also emphasized that polygamy violated the dignity of women and that it should be abolished wherever it continued to exist.

30. In its concluding observations adopted at its seventy-seventh session, in 2003, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the persistence of levirat and the prevalence of early marriage and female genital mutilation in Mali.[11] The Committee urged the State party to abolish levirat, apply appropriate penalties against those engaging in the practice and take appropriate measures to protect and support women, especially widows; raise the minimum legal age of marriage for girls; and prohibit and criminalize female genital mutilation, and strengthen its awareness-raising and education programmes in that regard. At its seventy-sixth session, in 2002, the Committee noted the continued practice of female genital mutilation in Egypt and recommended its eradication.[12] The Committee noted with concern that the Individuals and Family Code of Togo still contained provisions that discriminated against women and authorized polygamy, and that certain cultural practices, as well as women's unawareness of their rights, gave rise to many violations of women's rights in the country.[13] It recommended that the State party bring the aforementioned legislation into line with the Covenant, increase its efforts to educate girls and make the population more aware of women's rights.

31. In its concluding observations adopted at its seventy-fifth session, in 2002, the Committee expressed concern about the continued practice of female genital mutilation in Yemen, the persistence of polygamy and the practice of marriage of very young girls.[14] It urged the State party to abolish polygamy; eradicate female genital mutilation and ensure that proceedings were instituted against perpetrators; promote a human rights culture within society, along with greater awareness of women's rights, especially the right to physical integrity; and ensure protection of girls against very early marriage. At its seventy-fourth session, in 2002, the Committee noted with concern cases of female genital mutilation, "honour crimes" and early marriage involving girls and women of foreign extraction in Sweden.[15] It recommended that the State party continue its efforts to prevent and eradicate female genital mutilation and honour crimes; ensure that offenders were prosecuted, while promoting a human rights culture in the society at large, especially among the vulnerable sectors of immigrant communities; and take vigorous measures to provide better protection for minors in the matter of marriage.

32. In its concluding comments adopted at its twenty-eighth session in 2003, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concern at the extent of female genital mutilation and forced marriages in Norway[16] and requested that the State party continue its efforts to eradicate those practices. The Committee expressed concern at the continued existence of polygamy, discriminatory family laws and traditional practices in the Congo.[17] It recommended that marriage laws relating to polygamy be brought into compliance with the State party's Constitution and the Convention and that measures be introduced without delay to eliminate negative customs and traditional practices. The Committee expressed concern about the persistence of female genital mutilation in Kenya,

despite its prohibition by the State party,[18] and recommended the development of a plan of action, including a public-awareness campaign, to eliminate the practice. It also encouraged the State party to create an enabling environment for effective law enforcement and to devise programmes for alternate sources of income for those who performed female genital mutilation. The Committee expressed concern about the significant number of cases of female genital mutilation among migrant women of African descent in Switzerland[19] and recommended that the State party take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to eradicate the practice.

33. In its concluding comments adopted at its exceptional session in 2002, the Committee expressed concern about the continued existence of female genital mutilation in Uganda,[20] and recommended that the State party enhance its efforts to address the practice in order to eradicate it. The Committee also expressed concern about the continued existence of customary laws and practices on, among others, widow inheritance, polygamy and forced marriage in Uganda, and urged the State party to prohibit such practices and to work with relevant ministries and non-governmental organizations to create an enabling environment for legal reform, effective law enforcement and legal literacy. The Committee expressed concern about the low minimum legal age of marriage for girls in its concluding comments on Guatemala, Hungary, Mexico and Peru.[21] It urged all relevant States parties to take measures to raise the legal age of marriage and requested the Governments of Guatemala, Hungary and Peru to develop awareness campaigns on the negative implications of early marriage on the health and education of girls. The Committee expressed concern about the high rate of early marriages and the lack of systematic data on female genital mutilation in Yemen[22] and called upon the State party to enhance its activities to eradicate female genital mutilation, especially through awareness-raising campaigns.

34. In its concluding comments adopted at its twenty-seventh session, in 2002, the Committee expressed concern about the low age of marriage in some communities in Suriname[23] and urged that the marriage law be reviewed in line with the Convention. The Committee expressed concern about the wide acceptance of polygamy in Zambia[24] and recommended that comprehensive and effective measures be taken, including training for judicial and law enforcement officials and public awareness-raising campaigns, in order to eliminate the practice. At its twenty-sixth session, in 2002, the Committee expressed concern that child marriages were sanctioned under several of the legal regimes regulating marriage in Trinidad and Tobago.[25] It urged the State party to ensure that all its minimum age of marriage laws and other programmes to prevent early marriage were in line with the Convention. The Committee expressed concern that, despite the efforts made, a comprehensive approach was not being taken towards the prevention and elimination of violence against women in Uruguay,[26] particularly in regard to, inter alia, crimes of honour. Among other measures, the Committee recommended that the State party continue the training and awareness-raising programmes for judicial personnel, law enforcement officials and members of the legal and health professions, as well as awareness-raising measures to ensure that society would not tolerate any form of violence against women. The Committee also expressed concern that the Civil Code still contained discriminatory provisions, including those with respect to early marriage, and urged the State party to actively promote the elimination of discriminatory legal provisions, particularly in the Civil Code in matters relating to the family, and to bring legislation into line with the Convention.

35. At its twenty-eighth to thirty-first sessions, in 2001, 2002 and 2003, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about female genital mutilation in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Spain, the Sudan, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,[27] and about early and/or forced marriages in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Niger.[28] At those sessions, the Committee also addressed other harmful traditional practices including food taboos in Burkina Faso and Guinea-Bissau, forced-feeding in Mauritania and Niger and honour crimes in Lebanon.[29] Among its recommendations, the Committee urged States parties, including the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Mauritania and Niger, to take legislative and awareness-raising measures to combat and eradicate such practices, and it urged the Government of the United Kingdom to enforce, through educational and other measures, the prohibition of female genital mutilation. It urged the Government of Guinea-Bissau to combat practices involving the early marriage of girls, including through the involvement of community leaders and the use of education campaigns, and the Governments of Burkina Faso and Mauritania to enforce established minimum legal ages for marriage. It also recommended that the minimum legal age of marriage for girls be raised in Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique and Niger.

36. In its concluding observations adopted at its twenty-eighth session, in 2002, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted that the prevalence of certain traditions, customs and cultural practices in Benin led to substantial discrimination against women and girls and prevented them from fully exercising their rights under the Covenant.[30] It expressed concern about the inadequate action taken by the State party to combat the persistent practice of female genital mutilation and the lack of progress in countering practices, in particular polygamy and the early and forced marriage of girls. It recommended that the State party pass a law that would make female genital mutilation a punishable offence, establish mechanisms for the protection of women and establish programmes of education and financial support for practitioners of excision who ceased their activities. It also recommended that the State party ban customary practices that violated women's rights, take action to combat such practices and beliefs by all available means, including educational programmes involving traditional chiefs, and concentrate more on eradicating polygamy and forced marriages.

37. At its twenty-seventh session, in 2001, the Committee welcomed recent court decisions convicting perpetrators of female genital mutilation in France.[31] It expressed concern that the minimum age of marriage for girls in the Civil Code had not been changed to conform with that for boys in that country and recommended that the legal minimum age of marriage for girls be raised to 18 years. At its twenty-sixth session, in 2001, the Committee noted that the persistence of certain traditions, customs and cultural practices in Senegal and the Syrian Arab Republic continued to impede the full enjoyment by women and girls of their rights under the Covenant.[32] The Committee expressed concern that female genital mutilation was still practised with impunity by certain ethnic groups and in certain regions in Senegal, despite the existence of legislation banning the practice. It urged the State party to enact or enforce legislation prohibiting customary practices and to take measures to combat such practices by all means, including national education programmes.[33] The Committee expressed concern about persisting discrimination against women in Syrian society, which was particularly reflected in, inter alia, a low legal age of

marriage for girls and honour crimes.[14] It recommended that the State party take effective measures to incorporate a gender equality perspective in both legislation and governmental policies and administrative programmes, with a view to ensuring equality of men and women and addressing, among others, the problems of the low legal age of marriage for girls and honour crimes. Likewise at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee regretted the continuation of polygamy and the practices of dowry, deuki and prostitution among the Bedi caste in Nepal.[15] It urged the State party to enact or enforce legislation prohibiting customary practices and to take measures to combat such practices by all means, including national educational programmes.

38. In its concluding observations adopted at its sixty-second session, in 2003, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the persistence of female genital mutilation, the degrading treatment of widows and the trokosi system in Ghana.[16] It encouraged the State party to continue its efforts towards their elimination. At its sixty-first session, in 2002, the Committee invited Mali to provide fuller information in its next report on measures taken to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation.[17]

E. Organizations of the United Nations system[18]

1. Regional commissions

39. Because of its close collaboration with the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices, the Economic Commission for Africa had requested that organization to provide information, for the present report, on harmful traditional practices. The Inter-African Committee had described various initiatives in several African countries focused on, for example, training and information campaigns, and alternative employment opportunities for ex-circumcisers. The Commission and the Committee organized a conference on female genital mutilation in 2003, which adopted a common agenda for action and declared 6 February the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation.

40. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia recommended that the impact of traditional and customary practices on the status of women in some Arab countries in Western Asia and North Africa be addressed, for example by carrying out in-depth analysis on the nature and scope of the problem.

2. United Nations Development Programme

41. Several United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country offices addressed harmful traditional practices in their programming. For example, the UNDP office in Egypt collaborated with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in leading a coalition of national and international organizations against female genital mutilation to eliminate the practice in 60 villages. The project was intended as a pilot for dissemination on a national scale (see paras. 5 and 8). The UNDP office in India continued to collaborate with non-governmental organizations on the issue of child marriages. The UNDP office in Nepal adopted a rights-based, holistic approach to eliminating harmful traditional practices with strategies that include policy advocacy and awareness raising. That office also reported that research was being conducted on traditional and customary practices and that an

action plan, based on the findings, was being developed to raise awareness and to campaign against such practices.

3. United Nations Development Fund for Women

42. In South Asia, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) worked with partner organizations to support the passage of an amendment to the Country Code of Nepal, which would provide stringent punishment for child marriage and polygamy. In various regions of Africa, UNIFEM supported strategies to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS, including the impact of practices, such as early marriage, wife inheritance and female genital cutting, which increase the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection.

4. United Nations Children's Fund

43. In 2002, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) created a new position within its child protection section to address harmful traditional practices; established an internal task force to define a programmatic approach to address harmful traditional practices and draft a corporate guidance document; and initiated the creation of a database on female genital mutilation that records its prevalence in 16 countries, and trends of its prevalence in four countries, over a decade. UNICEF also initiated the establishment of a United Nations inter-agency reference group on harmful traditional practices. The group has decided to revise the 1997 joint statement of UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization on female genital mutilation, to extend participation in the statement to other agencies and to adopt the common goal of ending female genital mutilation by 2010.

44. In 2003, UNICEF began documenting results in the area of female genital mutilation in several countries, including Burkina Faso, Senegal and the Sudan, where it supported participatory community-based programmes. Among other measures, UNICEF supported initiatives of several non-governmental organizations to combat harmful traditional practices, such as the documentation of key results and effective approaches to combating female genital mutilation and the implementation of an education programme on female genital mutilation. In collaboration with the Ford Foundation, UNICEF is also organizing a meeting on female genital mutilation in Cairo to coordinate interventions and share information on funding issues.

5. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

45. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) suggested that many customary practices could be used as positive examples to reduce the vulnerability of girls and women to HIV infection, and indicated that those practices, such as betrothal rituals, which specified fidelity between partners and protection from violence within the household should be encouraged. It also considered that cultural practices could be adapted to retain their protective and celebratory significance, while discouraging their harmful aspects. UNAIDS emphasized that harmful customary practices had to be challenged and adapted appropriately at the community and national levels.

6. World Health Organization

46. In the context of the 1997 Regional Plan of Action to Accelerate the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa provided support to States working to eliminate the practice. WHO training materials on integrating the prevention of female genital mutilation and management of its health complications into existing nursing and midwifery training curricula were launched in English in 2001 and would be disseminated in French in 2003. Since 2001, WHO had supported 10 African countries[10] in the establishment of a Multidisciplinary Collaborating Group on Female Genital Mutilation to assist in data collection, documentation and promotion of interventions for the elimination of female genital mutilation, including research, progress assessment and priority setting. Further, the WHO Regional Office for Africa had established a database on women's health with a special focus on female genital mutilation. The database, intended to maximize the collection and collation of data on the practice at the country level, would provide information for developing programmes and projects and on effective strategies for eliminating the practice at the country, regional and international levels.

47. The WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office reported that female genital mutilation was still practised in some countries in the region, with variations in prevalence and degree of severity. The Office supported Member States working to eliminate the practice, particularly in the area of policy development, service protocols, information, education and communication materials and research.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

48. **Initiatives at the national, regional and international levels, particularly measures undertaken within the societies affected by harmful traditional practices, reflected the increased recognition of the need for the prevention and elimination of harmful traditional practices at all levels. Consultative and participatory initiatives involving men and women in the societies concerned, including community and traditional leaders, as well as judicial, legal, health-care, educational and media personnel, have been effective tools in combating harmful traditional practices.**

49. **Member States, non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities should continue and strengthen concrete measures aimed at the elimination of harmful traditional practices. In particular, legislative measures, including the adoption and enforcement of laws prohibiting such practices, implemented along with awareness raising, education, and training initiatives, are needed to address and challenge the underlying attitudes perpetuating harmful traditional practices and to strengthen the status of women in society from the earliest age. Information and data collection on the trends and prevalence of harmful traditional practices in the societies concerned need to be undertaken and expanded. Progress assessment and impact-monitoring studies on the initiatives implemented against such practices also need to be conducted so that appropriate and effective strategies can be documented and shared, and lessons from such initiatives adapted and replicated in other relevant settings. Further, cooperation among non-governmental organizations, Member States and United Nations entities should be strengthened with assistance from donor Governments and international organizations.**

Notes

[1] The present report is the fourth submitted to the General Assembly on the issue of traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls. For the three previous reports, see A/56/316, A/54/341 and A/53/354.

[2] Replies were received from Austria, Belarus, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, Italy, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Qatar, the Philippines, Portugal, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Spain, Thailand.

Replies to the Secretary-General's request for information on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 54/133 received from the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen were not incorporated into report A/56/316 due to time constraints. Information from those replies has been included in the present report.

[3] Levirat is a practice whereby widows are inherited by their deceased husband's male relatives.

[4] Sororat is a practice whereby women marry the spouse of their deceased sisters.

[5] Three non-governmental organizations, the Center for Reproductive Rights, Equality Now, and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices submitted information. Information reported by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices is set out in section III.E below. Many non-governmental organizations have continued to address harmful traditional practices.

[6] See E/CN.4/2002/83.

[7] E/CN.4/2002/73/Add.2.

[8] The deuki system is one whereby girls are offered to deities by their families. Once offered, girls often engage in prostitution.

[9] The trokosi system is one whereby girls are offered to religious priests to atone for the sins of their male relatives. Such girls are often forced to work in slave-like conditions and are also often forced to perform sexual services.

[10] CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.10, CCPR General Comments No. 28.

[11] CCPR/CO/77/MLI.

[12] CCPR/CO/76/EGY.

[13] CCPR/CO/76/TGO.

[14] CCPR/CO/75/YEM.

[15] CCPR/CO/74/SWE.

[16] CEDAW/C/2003/I/CRP.3/Add.2/Rev.1.

[17] CEDAW/C/2003/I/CRP.3/Add.7.

[18] CEDAW/C/2003/I/CRP.3/Rev.1.

[19] CEDAW/C/2003/I/CRP.3/Add.1/Rev.1.

[20] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38), part three, paras. 113-162.

[21] Ibid., paras. 163-208, 301-338, 410-453 and 454-502.

[22] Ibid., paras. 370-409.

[23] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38), part two, paras. 22-72.

[24] Ibid., paras. 211-261.

[25] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38), part one, paras. 119-166.

[26] Ibid., paras. 167-214.

[27] CRC/C/15/Add.193, CRC/C/15/Add.164, CRC/C/15/Add.165, CRC/C/15/Add.177, CRC/C/15/Add.160, CRC/C/15/Add.159, CRC/C/15/Add.179, CRC/C/15/Add.185, CRC/C/15/Add.190, CRC/C/15/Add.182 and CRC/C/15/Add.188.

[28] CRC/C/15/Add.193, CRC/C/15/Add.164, CRC/C/15/Add.165, CRC/C/15/Add.177, CRC/C/15/Add.160, CRC/C/15/Add.174, CRC/C/15/Add.172 and CRC/C/15/Add.179.

[29] CRC/C/15/Add.169.

[30] E/C.12/1/Add.78.

[31] E/C.12/1/Add.72.

[32] E/C.12/1/Add.62, E/C.12/1/Add.63.

[33] E/C.12/1/Add.62.

[34] E/C.12/1/Add.63.

[35] E/C.12/1/Add.66.

[36] CERD/C/62/CO/4.

[37] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 18* (A/57/18) paras. 391-411.

[38] Replies were received from the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization.

[39] The ten countries are Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania.

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Further implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/262, in which the Assembly decided to convene an international meeting in 2004, which will include a high-level segment, to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The report provides an overview of activities at the national, regional and international levels that have been planned in anticipation of the international meeting, to be hosted in Mauritius. The report also provides information on the schedule of regional preparatory meetings that will be undertaken in the effort to coordinate regional platforms based on the national assessment reports of small island developing States.

* A/58/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 57/262, inter alia, the General Assembly (a) decided to convene an international meeting in 2004, including a high-level segment, to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), and welcomed the offer of the Government of Mauritius to host the international meeting; (b) also decided that the comprehensive review should seek a renewed commitment by all countries and should focus on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action, inter alia, through the mobilization of resources for small island developing States; (c) further decided to convene regional preparatory meetings of small island developing States in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions, as well as an interregional preparatory meeting for all small island developing States, to undertake the review of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional and regional levels and to identify and develop small island developing States-specific inputs into the review; (d) called upon the United Nations system in general and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in particular, as well as the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the multilateral financial institutions and the Global Environment Facility, to put in place modalities at the international level to facilitate the meetings; and (e) requested the United Nations system to seek country inputs which were short and well focused and drew on, inter alia, material prepared for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in order to minimize the burden on participating States while maximizing the usefulness of the information gathered.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also invited all Member States, relevant regional and international agencies and the major groups identified in Agenda 21 to participate fully in the activities in preparation for the comprehensive review; invited international meetings of relevance to small island developing States to provide relevant input into the comprehensive review and its preparatory process; called for the participation, as observers, of associate member countries of the relevant regional commissions involved in the process; and requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

II. Background

3. It will be recalled that the adoption by the international community in 1994 of the Barbados Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was seen as the first example of a global partnership in which developed and developing countries undertook to work together in support of small island developing States' development strategies, while working to ensure the protection of the fragile environment of those States.

4. That commitment to a global partnership in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States was strongly reaffirmed during the 1999 twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, which was held in 1999 to review the implementation of the Programme of Action, and was reiterated

during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002.

5. Recognizing small island developing States as a special case both for environment and development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, in chapter VII on the sustainable development of small island developing States, called for action at all levels to accelerate the national and regional implementation of the Programme of Action, inter alia, with adequate financial resources, assistance for capacity-building and through the transfer of environmentally sound technologies.

6. In addition to those cross-sectoral imperatives, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation reiterated the need for continued attention to priority areas identified by small island developing States as crucial to their sustainable development process, including support for the finalization and early operationalization of economic, social and environmental vulnerability indices; support for efforts aimed at poverty eradication; the further implementation of sustainable fisheries management; the development of programmes on marine and coastal biodiversity and fresh water; assistance in dealing with climate change and natural disasters; support for the promotion of efficient use of energy, including indigenous and renewable energy sources; strengthening health-care services; and the need to ensure that, in the elaboration of the World Trade Organization work programme on trade in small economies, due account was taken of small island developing States, which have severe structural handicaps in integrating into the global economy, within the context of the Doha agenda.

7. Preparations for the 10-year review of the Programme of Action will benefit from the unique opportunity to harness the energy and focus on implementation and cooperation through partnerships generated at Johannesburg with a view to mobilizing the United Nations system and the wider international community in support of the small island developing States agenda.

8. The present report provides an overview of activities undertaken and preparations under way at the national, regional and international levels for the international meeting to be held in Mauritius. It also gives a forecast of future initiatives that will form part of the preparatory process for the international meeting.

Methodology and structure

9. In the preparation of the present report, the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including relevant regional commissions, were consulted through the Inter-Agency Task Force established by the Secretary-General for the purpose of preparing for the international meeting.

10. The present report also includes information on activities undertaken at the regional level in preparation for the international meeting by non-United Nations intergovernmental regional bodies and by a number of Governments at the national level.

III. Institutional arrangements

11. Preparations at the institutional level within the United Nations system have been launched and are summarized below.

12. On 21 February 2003, the Secretary-General established an Inter-Agency Task Force comprised of representatives of all the key organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system[1] involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Task Force held its first meeting in New York during the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

13. The Task Force was established to enable the United Nations system, with its key organs, organizations and bodies, to improve coordination and enhance cooperation on matters pertaining to the preparatory process leading up to and including the international meeting itself in 2004. It is envisaged that the Task Force would retain its mandate as regards the coordination of matters concerning small island developing States after the Mauritius international meeting.

14. A virtual Internet network for communications has been established on the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNet) for the purpose of updating all members of the Task Force on new developments. Task Force members have been encouraged to fully utilize the virtual network, which also allows for the sharing of relevant data and reports among Task Force members, greatly enhancing its work.

15. Furthermore, pursuant to resolution 57/262, a voluntary fund has been established for the purpose of assisting small island developing States, including the least developed among them, to participate fully and effectively in both the Mauritius international meeting and the various regional preparatory meetings and processes. Governments and organizations have been invited to consider making a contribution to that fund, and positive responses have already been received.

16. The Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs responded to the mandate given by the General Assembly by inviting small island developing States, through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), to present views on the process leading up to the international meeting. AOSIS transmitted to the Department a report on a brainstorming session held in San Pedro, Belize, in December 2002, which constituted the basic framework for how AOSIS viewed the preparations for the international meeting. Following rigorous consultations with AOSIS, the Unit developed a questionnaire template for national assessment reports, which was circulated in February 2002 to the United Nations Member States. Discussions have been initiated with various funding organizations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commonwealth Secretariat with a view to securing support for the national review and reporting exercises to be undertaken by small island developing States. Moreover, the Unit has been working closely with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States on preparations for the international meeting, in close consultation with AOSIS.

17. The national assessment reports are expected to play a key role in the preparatory process leading up to the Mauritius meeting in 2004 in the context of the regional preparatory meetings and the interregional meeting to be held in January 2004. While the template focused on issues concerning the national implementation of the Programme of Action, it also allowed for small island developing States to identify individual priority areas.

18. Although efforts were made to produce a concise and succinct template to assist small island developing States in their assessments, it is very likely that many

of the national assessments will not be completed by the commencement of the regional preparatory meetings, mainly because of the difficulty of securing technical and financial assistance for small island developing States to complete the exercise. However, it is expected that the preparatory meetings will afford an opportunity for exchange of information on issues of national concern and allow for the identification of regional priorities and the coordination of strategies to further address them. Small island developing States are nonetheless being strongly encouraged to continue the preparation of their national reports as an important part of the review process. On completion, the reports will be circulated through SIDSNet.

19. In draft resolution II recommended by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session for adoption by the Economic and Social Council,[7] further clarification was provided of the preparatory process for the international meeting. It was agreed, based on General Assembly resolution 57/262, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the debate on the issue held during the eleventh session, that the Commission, during its twelfth session, to be held in 2004, will convene a three-day preparatory session for the international meeting. The preparatory meeting will consider a synthesis report of the Secretary-General that will be prepared on the basis of the reports of the review process, in particular those on the outcome of national initiatives and regional preparations. The wider international community, including the donor community, is also invited to submit information on current and planned activities in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States.

IV. Preparations at the international level

20. In accordance with the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 57/262 and the above-mentioned draft resolution recommended by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session, the widest possible involvement in the review process is being encouraged, including, in addition to Member States, the participation of the major groups identified in Agenda 21, non-independent small island developing States, and agencies and organizations both within and outside the United Nations system.

21. It is anticipated that, building on the momentum of the Johannesburg Summit, opportunities to explore partnership initiatives between small island developing States and donor countries and organizations will be pursued; indeed, a number of those are already under active consideration. Several agencies within the United Nations system have also strengthened their programmes for providing technical assistance and developing the capacities of small island developing States in a range of sectors and disciplines. The preparatory process for the Mauritius international meeting offers an ideal opportunity for those and other organizations and donor countries to publicize new or existing initiatives which would support the advancement of implementation of the small island developing States agenda.

22. The Small Island Developing States Unit is currently in the process of collecting and compiling best practices and success stories regarding field projects and programmes in small island developing States aimed at implementing the Programme of Action at the international, national, regional and local levels. A

publication and a web-based databank are also envisaged, featuring best practices and success stories, in time for the Mauritius international meeting.

V. Preparations at the regional level

23. Preparations are under way for the convening of regional preparatory meetings for:

(a) Pacific small island developing States, to be held in Apia, Samoa, from 4 to 8 August 2003;

(b) Caribbean small island developing States, to be held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 18 to 22 August 2003;

(c) Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas small island developing States to be held in Praia, Cape Verde, from 1 to 5 September 2003.

24. The Small Island Developing States Unit is cooperating with AOSIS to ensure that the results of various experts meetings are brought before the intergovernmental process. So far the results of three such meetings have been circulated to AOSIS member States:

(a) Report of a workshop on the theme "Towards sustainable development in the Caribbean Islands: capacity-building for managing and protecting biological resources" (Cuba, 25-29 November 2002);

(b) Report of an interregional workshop to support the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in small island developing States (Antigua and Barbuda, 7-10 April 2003);

(c) Report of a workshop on the theme "Using information for decision-making on sustainable development: issues and challenges for Caribbean small island developing States" (St. Lucia, 27-28 May 2003).

25. Other expert meetings on thematic issues have been planned, focusing on priority areas of small island developing States, including:

(a) A workshop on energy and capacity-building, held in Niue from 7-11 July 2003;

(b) A workshop on the vulnerability of small island developing States, to be held in Dominica from 29 September to 3 October 2003.

26. Those regional preparatory and expert meetings will culminate in the convening of an interregional preparatory meeting with ministerial-level participation to harmonize the platform for all small island developing States, to be held in Nassau, Bahamas, from 26 to 30 January 2004.

27. The need to ensure full and effective participation by small island developing States, including non-self-governing small island developing States and major groups, is included in the mandate of both General Assembly resolution 57/262 and draft resolution II recommended by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.[2] The provision of adequate resources to facilitate such participation is therefore an urgent requirement.

28. Beyond preparations for the regional preparatory meetings, small island developing States have been engaged in other regional activities that will inform the review process.

A. Pacific region

29. The Pacific region has held regional post-Summit workshops, and supported by the Council of the Regional Organizations of the Pacific, the Pacific small island developing States are preparing for a regional meeting to be held in Apia, Samoa, from 4 to 8 August 2003.

30. Preparations in the region have been spearheaded by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, with the full support of the other member organizations of the Community of Regional Organizations in the Pacific.

B. Caribbean region

31. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional office for the Caribbean and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) secretariat, which together constitute the joint secretariat for the implementation of the Programme of Action in the Caribbean region, have been giving active consideration to preparations for the Mauritius international meeting, at both the institutional and country levels. At a meeting of the Caribbean small island developing States and members of the Caribbean Inter-Agency Collaborative Group, regional preparation for the review exercise was launched with a view to maximizing the outcome of the Trinidad and Tobago regional meeting to be convened from 18 to 22 August 2003.

32. To prepare for the regional meeting, the ECLAC subregional office circulated a questionnaire to CARICOM States and regional and international agencies involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action in the region in order to comprehensively evaluate the region's progress against previously established targets. That questionnaire, which was intended to elucidate regional objectives, will complement the national assessment reports.

C. Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas region

33. A meeting will be convened for the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas region in Praia, Cape Verde, from 1 to 5 September 2003. The Small Island Developing States Unit is pursuing a proposal for a cooperative arrangement for the Atlantic and Indian Ocean small island developing States, and has most recently been consulting with the Indian Ocean Commission and the Commonwealth Secretariat. It is also expected that there will be consultations on the proposal for a cooperative arrangement during or after that meeting.

VI. Preparations at the national level

34. The difficulties experienced by small island developing States in completing their national assessment reports has already been addressed. Work is ongoing with a view to their submission in due course. In the meantime, Governments are being encouraged to initiate local public awareness and educational campaigns, in order to raise the level of awareness of small island developing States populations regarding the vital importance of the Mauritius international meeting in bringing the major issues to international attention.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

35. **Work in preparation for the international meeting is progressing steadily. Ultimately, the success of the review exercise will depend not only on the efforts of the small island developing States themselves but also on the level of engagement of the wider international community in the process, in the spirit of cooperation and partnership.**

36. **The fullest participation of Member States, the United Nations system international organizations and major groups is therefore strongly encouraged in order to ensure the success of this effort to comprehensively review implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.**

37. **It is expected that the early designation of a high-level official as Secretary-General for the international meeting will enhance effective preparation for the meeting, as called for in General Assembly resolution 57/262.**

38. **The outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings planned for the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions will be emphasized in the report to the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its twelfth session so as to link regional efforts with the substantive outcome of the international meeting.**

39. **The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States will continue their close collaboration and their consultations with AOSIS in this process in order to facilitate active intergovernmental support for the preparatory process and the widest engagement of small island developing States Members at the upcoming regional and subregional meetings.**

40. **To support all of those efforts, there is a need for high-level regional and global advocacy. It is recommended that the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat continue to be involved in developing the advocacy campaign for the meeting and establish an inter-agency communications group for that purpose.**

Notes

[1] The following bodies are represented on the Inter-Agency Task Force: United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States of the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations University, Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, World Trade Organization, World Meteorological Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Civil Aviation Organization, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Telecommunication Union, World Intellectual Property Organization, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council (2003), Supplement No. 9* (E/2003/29), chap. I, sect. A.